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NATURE MYTHS

OF MANY LANDS

BY

FLORENCE V. FARMER

NEW YORK ·:· CINCINNATI ·:· CHICAGO
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FARMER'S NATURE MYTHS.

W. P. I

PREFACE

NEARLY every country has its myths, and most of them are "Nature Myths." They represent the explanations of the phenomena of nature by primitive people.

The primitive mind, like the mind of a child, endows all natural objects with life, and, to a certain degree, with the feelings and moral responsibilities of human beings. Hence, natural phenomena which are beyond the comprehension of men are regarded as mysteries due to powers either residing in them or ruling over them similar to human powers, though greater, and controlled by motives like those of men.

In these attempts to explain nature is the origin of Nature Myths.

They are not mere strange fancies and marvelous fictions invented for the sake of amusement. They rather represent the fundamental ideas underlying the moral and religious nature of man vivified by the imagination. It is this dominance of the imagination, so characteristic of the early stages

of society, which gives to a myth its peculiar dramatic expression and stamps the popular creeds of all nations with a poetic character.

In time these early simple beliefs, elaborated by the poets, assumed a literary character, and upon them most of the religions of history are founded.

Moreover, all early histories are thoroughly impregnated with them, so that racial traits both shaped them and may be discerned in them. The Greek myth is as different from the Norse myth as the Greek is different from the Norseman.

Myths are especially good reading matter for children, because the child mind reproduces, quite largely, the primitive mind. The simple explanations of nature appeal strongly to him. He, too, has wondered about these same phenomena of nature, and he is pleased with the tales which give an explanation of them.

For this reason myths furnish the element of interest so essential to effective mental activity. Children delight in myths, and what they like to read they will readily learn to read.

The myths given in this book have been selected from many sources and various races, including twenty-two nationalities.

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NATURE MYTHS
FROM AMERICAN SOURCES

(8)

THE GIFT OF FIRE

THE GIFT OF FIRE

VERY long ago the Indians had no fire. All their food was eaten raw. Their evenings were dull and cheerless, without fire and without light.

One day, while a number of people were seated on the grass eating a meal of raw meat, a pretty bird with a shining tail came and hovered around them.

After admiring its beautiful feathers, some one said: "Pretty bird, what do you want? Pretty bird, where do you come from?"

"I come," replied the bird, "from a beautiful country far away, and I bring you the gift of fire. That which you see about my tail is fire. If you want it, you must earn

it. Then, too, you must be worthy of it. No one who has been guilty of a bad deed or of a mean action need try to obtain it. If each of you will get some pitch pine and meet me here to-morrow morning, I will tell you how you may earn this great blessing."

So saying, the bird flew away.

When it came the next morning, it asked, "Have you all your pitch pine ready?"

"Yes," cried they.

"Then, we will have a race," said the bird, "and whoever catches me and puts his bit of pine on my tail shall have fire as his reward. With it he can warm himself, cook his food, and do many things that will bring comfort to himself and to his children and grandchildren. Here I go!"

The men and women, and the boys and girls, followed helter-skelter, some laughing, some shouting, others in their haste falling over rocks and into water. Some, becoming tired and discouraged, turned back and went home, saying that anything that was

so hard to get was not worth trying for. The chase lasted long, and everybody was becoming tired and hungry when, at last, one of the men came so near the bird that he almost caught it.

"You can never get the prize," said the bird, "you are too selfish. You do not care for any one, whether sick or hungry, so long as you have all you want for yourself. You might just as well give up now, for you can never catch me."

With that, away went the bird, and another man took up the chase. He had heard what was said to the other man, so he called out: "Pretty bird, let me catch you. I have never done anything mean or bad. If ever I saw any one hungry or thirsty, I gave him food and drink, and if he needed shelter, I gave him such as I had. Do, please, let me catch you."

"All that you say is true," answered the bird, "but in one point you fail. You speak soft words to your neighbor so that you may steal his goods. You cannot have the prize."

Then the bird, in flying, came near a wigwam where a woman was caring for a sick child. "Pretty bird," she called, "I cannot follow you because I cannot leave this poor, sick child. But won't you come to me and give me some of your fire?"

"What good deed have you done that you should be the one to get it?" inquired the bird, alighting near the wigwam.

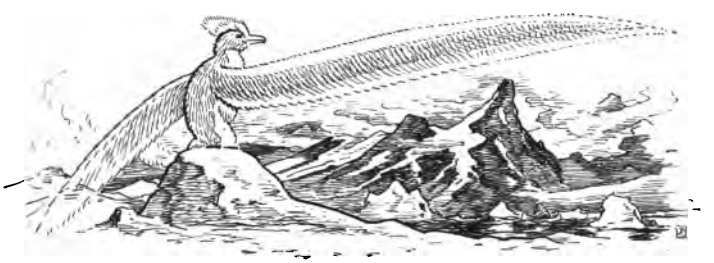
"I have done nothing but what was my duty to do," replied the woman. "I always have to work so hard that I do not seem to have time to do anything that is really great and good."

"Ah, here is a good woman," said the bird. "You are always doing good while thinking it only your duty. You are doing a great and good deed now. Bring a small piece of wood, put it on my tail, and take the fire. It is justly yours!"

When the pitch pine was laid on the bird's tail, a flame blazed up. Then the bird flew away, leaving the woman with her lighted torch.

Soon all the others of the tribe came running up, tired out after their long chase, and the woman let them light their wood at her fire; for she wished that they, too, might be comforted with the light and warmth and might cook their food.

From that time the Indians have never been without fire. Their evenings are brighter and more cheerful; and their food is better because it has been cooked.[1]



THE WIND BIRD

During the long, cold winter nights the Indians used to gather around their camp fires, while the old men told wonderful tales of their country and people. It was at one

[1] An Indian myth.

of these meetings that an old warrior told the following story.

When the Great Spirit lived among men on this earth, he went out on the ocean every day in his canoe with his bow and arrows to kill sea fowls.

At one time it was very windy for several days. The weather became worse and worse. At length the wind blew so hard that the Great Spirit could not manage his canoe, and he was forced to go back to the land. This made him very angry.

"Wuchowsen, the giant bird, has done this," he cried. "I must go to him and tell him to be more careful."

He set out and traveled southward till he reached the end of the earth. There he found a great white bird sitting upon a high rock.

This bird was so large that its head almost touched the clouds, and its wings, if outstretched, would have reached from one side of the earth to the other. Whenever

the bird moved these immense wings, it caused a great wind to blow.

As the Great Spirit approached, the bird was gently flapping its wings back and forth.

"Wuchowsen!" cried the Great Spirit, "you have no pity on the poor Indians! You have caused such a great windstorm that we cannot go out in our canoes. Be more careful with your wings! You should never move them quickly, for it causes such a dreadful wind on the earth that our wigwams are nearly blown to pieces and we dare not venture upon the water for fear of the fierce waves. You must sit still now, and not move your wings at all for a while; then the Indians may go out in their canoes in safety."

The giant bird replied: "I have been here since the world began. From those earliest days I have moved my wings whenever and however I pleased. I shall do the same now."

Then the Great Spirit rose up in his might. He rose as high as the sky, and the

giant bird seemed small beside him. He took the bird in his hands as though it were a duck, and tied both its wings flat against its body.

"This will teach you to be more careful in your treatment of the Indians," he cried.

Then the Great Spirit left the southland and went back to his own home.

The Indians could now go out in their canoes all day long, as there was not a breath of wind for many weeks and the water was as smooth as glass.

The Great Spirit enjoyed himself greatly for many days, but by and by the waters became so stagnant and thick that it was hard to paddle a canoe through them. The weather was very warm and the Indians became sick.

Then the Great Spirit remembered the giant bird which he had tied so that it could not move its wings.

Again he traveled to the far south. There he found the poor bird just as he had left it, with its wings tied tightly against its body.

When he had untied the wings, he said: "Let this be a lesson to you, Wuchowsen. In the future flap your wings gently, or do not flap them at all. The Indians need a little wind to make the waters rise and fall and keep them fresh."

The giant bird was so glad to be free that it never again dared to disobey the Great Spirit, and since that day the winds have not been so terrible.[1]

SUMMER

The day was cold. Dead leaves were drifting here and there on the frozen ground. The frost spirit lay hidden on the north side of

[1] An Indian myth.

mur, and the scent of growing grasses filled the air.

The Great Spirit walked on through the forest. Soon the leafless trees were gay with many leaves and flowers. Earth and air seemed filled with beauty and music. The forest was astir; birds sang their gay songs as they flitted from tree to tree; butterflies spread

their wings; and bees hummed among the flowers.

Soon the Great Spirit saw many little fairies singing and dancing about their queen, while others sat on the green moss weaving a wreath of fairest flowers.

The queen of these fairies was Summer, the most beautiful summer that was ever dreamed of. Her eyes were like the clear blue sky, her cheeks as pink as the wild rose. Her delicate green dress of leaves fluttered about in the breeze, and her crown of golden sunbeams cast a warm, bright glow on all around.

Suddenly the Great Spirit ran among the fairies, caught up Summer and hid her under his great heavy blanket. Then he hastened northward again to the cold, gloomy wigwam of Winter.

The giant welcomed him kindly, for he hoped to freeze him to sleep as before. But the Great Spirit had Summer under his blanket and was not afraid.

This time he did all the talking.

He told of the beauties of Summer; how she unlocked the rivers and sent the waters running down to the ocean; how she called back the birds from the southland, brought forth the flowers, and cheered all the animals of the forest with her warm, bright sunshine.

By and by the wigwam grew warmer and warmer, and Winter began to melt.

The Great Spirit talked on and on. The warmth increased, and Winter grew smaller and smaller.

After a time both he and his icy home shrank and dwindled until finally they melted entirely away.

Then the Great Spirit threw aside his blanket, and Summer came forth.

Everything awoke. The fairies came singing and dancing with garlands of flowers, the green grass sprang up, and the snow melted and ran down to the rivers, carrying away the dead leaves.

Soon there was nothing left to remind one

of Winter, for the beautiful queen of Summer had taken the place of the gloomy king of Winter.[1]

THE SUN, MOON, AND STARS

At the beginning of the world there were no sun, moon, and stars in the sky. There were no day and night, but the earth was lighted by a twilight like that seen now at the breaking of dawn.

Some of the wise men met together to discuss whether there should be more light or not. They talked and talked for many hours, each telling what he thought would be best.

Finally they agreed to have a sun to shine

[1] An Indian myth.

in the daytime and a moon and stars to shine at night.

The old men of the tribe at once set to work to make the sun. This was done in a large house on the mountain built for that purpose.

To other tribes was given the work of making the moon and stars.

When the sun and moon were made, the wise men arranged a plan for keeping them where they belonged in the sky. Two dumb flute blowers were given charge of these bodies and have carried them ever since.

They staggered at first with their burdens. The one who carried the sun allowed it to hang so low that it came near burning the earth before he had reached the mountain cave through which he was to pass during the night. After a little practice the two carriers managed better and all went smoothly.

Now after the sun and moon had been placed in the sky, the people began embroidering the stars in beautiful patterns. Bears

and fishes and all kinds of animals were skillfully made. This, of course, took a very long time.

While they were carefully working these designs an old prairie wolf rushed in, exclaiming: "What folly is this? Why are you making all this fuss to make a bit of embroidery? Just throw the stars about the sky anywhere!"

With that the wolf scattered a large pile of stars all over the heavens. That is why there is such a confusion among the few patterns which the Indians had arranged so carefully.[1]

[1] An Indian myth.

A LEGEND OF THE MORNING STAR

Two Indian children, brother and sister, loved each other so dearly that one was never seen without the other.

One day they were told that they were to be parted.

The sister had been called by the Great Spirit to go far away to the Place of Breaking Light.

The brother was to go to the hills to live among the sprites.

When they were about to leave each other, the sister said: "Farewell, my brother! I shall think of you always and watch over you from my new home. When you look

toward the east and see beautiful red clouds floating along the sky, think of your sister, and believe that she is painting and adorning herself with the gay colors."

The brother replied: "Farewell, my own dear sister! I will dwell upon the rocks that look toward the east that I may gaze upon you and delight in your beauty forever."

A sound of many winds now fell upon the ears of the brother and sister, and the four Spirits of the Heavens came forth. They lifted up the sister and carried her to the Place of Breaking Light, where she was changed into the morning star.

Then the brother went to the hills and lived upon the rocks that looked toward the east.

There, in the early dawn, every day he watched for the morning star and the beautiful red clouds with which his sister adorned herself as she stood in her star lodge in the sky.[1]

[1] An Indian legend.

THE ANIMALS IN THE SKY

At one time, when the animals ruled upon the earth, Little Turtle was the only one ever allowed to visit the sky.

Because she had helped in making the sun, moon, and stars, she was taken from earth to sky whenever she wished. She was even allowed to have a house of her own in the sky. When she came to earth for the Great Meeting of the animals, she was carried by the Black Cloud in which were springs, ponds, streams, and lakes. Every other animal wished for this same honor and tried to do some great work that it might be granted to him as it had been to Little Turtle.

One day the deer called to the rainbow, "Carry me up to the sky, please; I must talk to Little Turtle at once."

The rainbow did not wish to do this without first asking permission of the Great Chief, so she replied: "I cannot take you now. Come to me in the winter, when I rest on the mountain by the lake. Then I will take you up to the house of Little Turtle."

The deer looked and waited all winter for the rainbow, but the rainbow did not come.

When the rainbow came in the summer the deer said: "I waited for you all winter on the mountain by the lake and you did not come. Why did you deceive me?"

The rainbow said: "When you see me in the fog, over the lake, come to me. Then you can go up. I will carry you to the house of Little Turtle in the sky."

So the deer stood on the hill over the lake, waiting and watching for the rainbow.

One day the fog rolled in heavy banks and thick masses over the lake. When the rainbow threw the beautiful arch from the lake to the hill, a very white and shining light flashed and shone about the

deer. A straight path, with all the colors of the rainbow, lay before the deer. It led through a strange forest.

The rainbow said, "Follow the beautiful path through the strange forest."

This the deer did. The beautiful way led the deer to the house of Little Turtle in the

sky. There the deer stayed and was allowed to go about the sky wherever he wished.

When the time for the Great Meeting came, the deer had not returned to the earth.

The bear said: "The deer has not yet come. Where is he? Can any one tell?"

Then the hawk flew all about to look for the deer, but he could not find the deer in the air.

The wolf searched in the woods, but the deer could not be found in the woods anywhere.

When Little Turtle came in the Black Cloud, in which were the springs, ponds, streams, and lakes, the bear said: "The deer has not yet come to the meeting. Where is the deer? There can be no meeting without the deer."

Little Turtle replied: "The deer is in the sky. The rainbow made a beautiful pathway of all her colors for the deer to go up by."

All the animals at the meeting looked up to the sky and saw the deer running about there.

Then the Little Turtle showed them the beautiful pathway through the strange forest made for the deer by the rainbow. All the animals except the mud turtle went along the beautiful way which led them up to the sky.

They remain there to this day. They may often be seen flying or running about the sky.[1]

THE WATER LILY

Long, long ago there was a time when the world was filled with happy people.

[1] An Indian myth.

There was no war, and there was plenty of game in the forests. No one was in want; sickness was unknown; and the beasts of the field were tame and obeyed man.

There was no winter with its cold, icy blasts. The year was one long spring. Every tree and bush yielded fruit, and the earth was covered with flowers. The air was filled with the sweet music of song birds that flew gayly from branch to branch, fearing no one, for there was no one to harm them.

At that time the Indians were the only people in America. Living as the great mother wished them to live, they were happy and strong.

Every night the Indians met on the wide green prairie to watch the heavens. They loved the stars and believed them to be the homes of those whom the Great Spirit had taken from the earth.

One night they saw a star which shone brighter than all the others. It was just over a mountain peak in the far south.

They watched this star for many nights. Each night it seemed to come nearer, and after a while they found that it was over some tall trees, only a short distance away.

A number of warriors were sent to find out what the strange star might be.

They reported that it was like a big bird on the top of the tree.

Then the Indians became alarmed, for they feared that it might be some evil thing that had come to vex them.

One moon passed and they had not yet learned the meaning of the strange star.

Then a young warrior had a dream. In the dream a beautiful maiden seemed to stand at his side and talk to him.

"Young brave," she said, "yours is a lovely world. I like the birds and flowers, the lakes and rivers, and the mountains clothed in green. I have left my sisters in yonder world and have come to live among you. Ask your great and wise men where I shall dwell that I may see your people

always. Ask them what form I shall take to be loved by all."

The young man awoke. On stepping out of his wigwam, he saw the bright star in its usual place on the tree top.

He went to the older warriors and told them of his dream.

They thought that the maiden who had talked with him was the star that had been seen in the south, and that, since she loved the Indians, she would dwell on the earth with them.

The next night five young braves were sent with a peace pipe to welcome the beautiful maiden to the earth.

As they went back to the village, the strange star followed them and hovered over their homes until daybreak.

Again the maiden came to the young warrior in a dream.

Again she asked where she should dwell and what form she should take to be loved by the Indians.

Many places were spoken of. Some of the warriors thought that she might live in the top of a big tree; some said that she might take the form of a beautiful flower.

At last she was told to choose a place and form for herself.

At first she chose to live in the heart of a white rose on the mountain side, but there she could not be seen by all.

Then she went to the wide green prairie to dwell. There she feared the hoofs of the buffaloes.

Next she tried the rocky cliffs, but there the children, whom she loved, could not see her.

"I know where I will dwell," she said at last; "I will dwell where I can see the gliding canoes of the people I love best. Children shall be my playmates all day."

With these words she alighted on the quiet waters of a lake, where she saw herself reflected as in a mirror.

The next morning the Indians found hundreds of white flowers floating on the surface of the lake.

They taught their children to handle these water lilies gently, so that they might be happy and stay on the earth forever.[1]

THE DEER AND THE RABBIT

In the old days the animals were fond of sports and would often get up contests with prizes for the winners.

Once a prize was offered to the animal with the finest coat, and although the otter deserved to win it, the rabbit stole his coat, and nearly got the prize for himself.

[1] An Indian legend.

After a while the animals came together again, and made a large pair of horns which were to be given to the best runner.

The race was to be through the woods where there were many bushes, and the one who made the best time, with the horns on his head, was to have them for his own.

Everybody knew from the first that either the deer or the rabbit would be the winner, and they expected it to be the rabbit, who was a great runner and a general favorite. But the rabbit had no tail, and always went by jumps, and his friends were afraid that the horns would make him fall over in the bushes unless he had something to balance them. So they made a tail for him with a stick and some bird's down.

"Now," said the rabbit, "let me look over the ground where I am to run."

So he went into the woods, and was gone so long that at last one of the animals went to see what had become of him. There he was at work gnawing down bushes and

cutting off the low branches of the trees, and making a road for himself clear through to the other side of the woods.

The animal did not let the rabbit see him, but went back quietly and told the others what he had seen. Soon the rabbit came out again, ready to put on the horns and begin the race, but several of the animals said that he had been gone so long that it looked as if he must have been cutting a road through the bushes. The rabbit said that he had not, but they all went to the place, and there was the open road.

Then the chief was angry and said to the rabbit, "Since you are so fond of it, you may spend the rest of your life gnawing twigs and bushes." And so he does to this day.

The animals would not allow the rabbit to run in the race at all now. They put the horns on the deer. He went into the worst part of the woods and made his way out to the other side, then turned round and came back again on a different track, in such

fine style that every one said he had won the horns. But the rabbit felt angry about it, and made up his mind to get even with the deer.

One day, soon after the contest for the horns, the rabbit stretched a large grapevine across the road, and gnawed it nearly in two in the middle. Then he went back a little, took a good run, and jumped up at the vine. He kept on running and jumping up at the vine, until the deer came along and asked him what he was doing.

"Don't you see?" said the rabbit. "I'm so strong that I can bite through that grapevine at one jump."

The deer did not believe this and wanted to see it done. So the rabbit ran back a little, made a spring, and bit through the vine where he had gnawed it before.

When he saw that, the deer said, "Well, I can do it if you can."

So the rabbit stretched a larger grapevine across the road, but did not gnaw it in the middle as he had before.

Then the deer ran back as he had seen the rabbit do, made a jump, and struck the grape-vine right in the middle. But it only flew back, and threw him over on his head. He tried again and again, until he was tired and bruised.

"Let me see your teeth," said the rabbit. The deer showed him his teeth, which were long and sharp like a wolf's teeth.

"No wonder you can't do it," said the rabbit; "your teeth are too blunt to bite any-

thing. Let me sharpen them for you, like mine. My teeth are so sharp that I can cut through a stick just like a knife."

The deer thought that was just the thing.

So the rabbit got a hard stone with rough edges and filed and filed away at the deer's teeth until they were filed down almost to the gums. "Now try it," said the rabbit.

So the deer tried again, but this time he could not bite at all.

"Now you've paid for your horns," said the rabbit, as he laughed and started home through the bushes.

Ever since then the deer's teeth have been so blunt that he cannot bite anything but grass and leaves.[1]

[1] An Indian folk story.

WHY BEARS ARE AFRAID OF MEN

Long, long ago there was a tribe of little men who lived near a great number of bears. These men were afraid of the bears, for their arrows were so small that they would not kill the bears when shot into them, and only seemed to enrage them the more. The bears were always catching the little men and eating them.

One day a little boy, who lived alone with his grandmother, was making a bow.

"What are you going to do with that?" asked the grandmother.

"I am going to kill one of those ugly big bears," replied the boy.

"You cannot do that," said his grand-

mother. "The bears are too big and strong, and they have killed all of our family. What could a little boy like you do? Arrows will not harm those bears, and, if you tried to shoot them, you would be killed, just as your father and your grandfather were killed. I shall not allow you to go hunting at all. So put away that bow, for you must never use it."

She kept him near her and watched him closely, so that he had no chance to try his new bow or to go into the woods alone.

The boy knew of a valley near by, to which the bears came every evening, looking for food, and he planned to go there as soon as he could. So he waited patiently for a chance.

One day when his grandmother went to the river for water, he stole away quietly to the valley, carrying his bow and arrows with him. He climbed up into a tree and sat waiting and watching for the bears.

Soon he heard the crackling of the bushes,

and a number of bears came into the valley. The little fellow put his fingers to his mouth and gave a long, loud whistle.

The bears stopped, looked about, and then came near the tree. The largest one, which had killed so many of the little men and of which all were afraid, came close to the tree, sat down, and looked up at the boy.

"What are you doing up in the tree, little man?" he asked.

"I came here to kill you," said the boy.

This reply amused the bear so much that he laughed and laughed and laughed He opened his mouth so wide that the boy could see far down his throat. Quick as lightning he drew his bow and shot one of his arrows down the open throat of the bear. Then the bear's laugh turned into a roar, and he fell down, rolled over, and died.

The other bears were so frightened at this that they took to their heels and scampered up the valley and over the mountains.

The boy went home and told his grand-

mother what he had done, but she would not believe him.

The next day, however, all the men gathered together and the boy told them his story. When he had finished they went to the valley and found the body of the bear. How they did rejoice and praise the boy for his good deed! The little fellow was now a great hero, and the men were very proud that he was one of their tribe.

Ever since that time bears have hidden in the woods and have been afraid of men.[1]

THE BLIND MOLE

Long years ago the animals reigned on the earth, and there were no people except one

[1] An Indian folk story.

small girl and her little brother, who lived in a tiny lodge near the woods.

The brother was very small, not having grown beyond the size of a baby, but his sister was as large as other girls. Being so much larger than he, she was obliged to do all the work, taking care of both her brother and herself.

One winter morning the girl told her brother that she should leave him at home while she went out into the woods; for she was afraid some accident might happen to him.

She gave him a bow and some arrows and said, "Hide yourself until you see a snowbird come near the lodge looking for food. Then draw your bow and shoot it."

The lad hid himself as his sister had directed, and waited for the bird. The bird came, and he quietly drew his bow and shot an arrow; but he was not successful, and the bird flew away. This made him very unhappy, but his sister, on her return, begged him not to be discouraged, but to try again.

On the next day, to his great joy, he succeeded in shooting a fine large bird, which he proudly showed to his sister when she returned at evening.

"My sister," he said, "I wish you would take its skin off and stretch it, and when I have killed more birds I will have a coat made of the skins."

This was done, and the boy succeeded in killing ten birds. Then the sister took the skins and made him a little coat.

"Sister," said he one day, "are we all alone in the world? Is there no one else living?"

"There may be some others living," answered his sister, "but they are terrible people, and you must never go near them or they may kill you. You must never go away from our lodge alone."

The more the boy thought of it, the more he wanted to go out into the world and see if he could find any more people. Being left alone one morning, he decided to go out by himself and see a little of the world.

After walking a long time and meeting no one, he became tired and lay down to rest. He fell asleep, and while sleeping, the sun shone so hot upon him that it singed and drew up his little bird-skin coat. When he awoke he found that the coat was too tight, and taking it off, he saw that it was spoiled.

Then he was very angry, and shook his fist at the sun in his rage.

"You need not think that you can play such tricks on me just because I am small and you are so large and so high," he shouted. "Some day I will make you suffer for this."

He then returned home and told his sister what had happened. Refusing to eat, he lay down, and remained in one position for ten days; and then, turning over upon the other side, remained ten days more. Then he arose and told his sister to make a snare for him, that he might catch the sun.

"I have nothing strong enough," said the girl. "I could make a noose of deer's dried sinew. Would that do?"

"No," replied the boy. "I must have a long, strong cord."

The sister went out into the woods to look for something. By and by she returned with a long, twisted cord.

The moment the boy saw the cord he was delighted, and began pulling it through his lips; and as fast as he drew it, it changed into a metal cord, which he wound around his body until he thought he had enough.

A little after midnight he rose, and made ready to catch the sun when it came up. He fixed the snare where the sun would first strike the land as it rose above the earth.

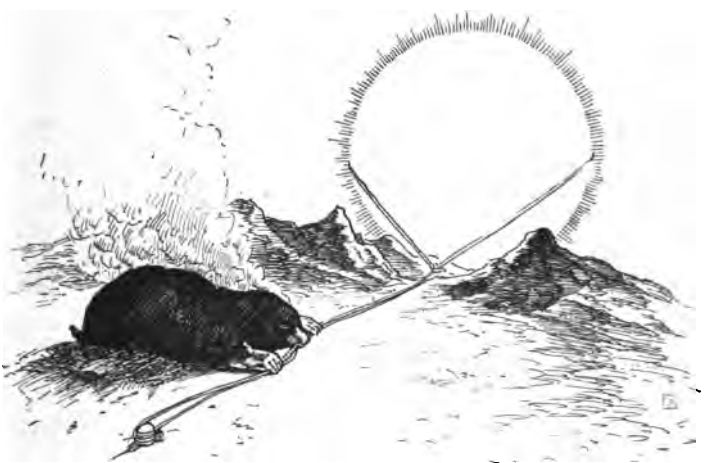
Sure enough, he caught the sun, so that it was held fast in the cord and could not rise!

Now, the animals who ruled the earth were in great trouble. They had no light, and were so frightened that they all met together to decide what must be done.

Several tried to cut the cord that held the sun, but the rays burned them to ashes before they could get near enough to do it.

"Let me try," said the mole, who at that time was the largest animal in the world. She was so large that she looked like a mountain when she stood up.

When she came to the place where the sun was fastened to the earth, her back smoked with the great heat. She did not give up, however, but gnawed the cord in two with her sharp teeth, and set the sun free. Just



as she loosened the last cord the sun sprang forth, and the bright rays shone full in her eyes, blinding her, while at the same time she

was so burned that she became very small, and has remained small ever since.

From that time all moles have lived in a dark hole in the ground, and their eyes, which they do not need to use, have become small like those of their great hero mole. They are now so hidden by their fur that some people think that the whole mole family is blind.[1]

THE FIRST RATTLESNAKES

Long, long ago the Great Spirit would often come down from his happy home in the sky to watch the Indians at their work, or go hunting and fishing with them.

[1] An Indian folk story.

When each man did as well as he could, the Great Spirit was pleased. But if an Indian were lazy or wicked, the Spirit was angry, and the Indian was sure to be punished in some way.

One bright sunny day the sky was clear, the wind blew gently over the cornfields, the birds were singing in the air, and the bees were humming among the flowers. It was such a beautiful day that some of the Indians had stopped their work and were singing and dancing, while others were telling stories.

In the midst of their pleasures the Great Spirit left his home in the sky and came down among them in the form of a feeble old man.

"Stop singing and dancing and listen to me," he cried. "There is to be a great flood on the earth. Go and prepare yourselves and your children, instead of wasting your time in play. There is no time to spare. The flood will be such as you have never seen or heard of before."

"Oh, do not bother us," laughed the Indians; "we do not care about what is to come. We want to have a good time now. What does an old man like you know of floods? Go away and leave us to our pleasures."

"I know that it will be a great flood," said the old man. "The waters will rise as high as the tops of the highest trees. Everything on the earth will be covered."

But the Indians only laughed and mocked him, crying, "That will be very wet, indeed, old man! You had better run away quickly, or you may be drowned. Do not worry about us. We can take care of ourselves."

So they danced and laughed and made merry, but would not listen to the old man. Every time he tried to speak they hurrahed and made a great noise. Then they went into their wigwams and brought out their rattles.

Some of these were made of sticks on which were tied hundreds of cocoons that were dry and full of acorns and grass seed.

Some were made of four shells fastened together so that they made a great noise when shaken.

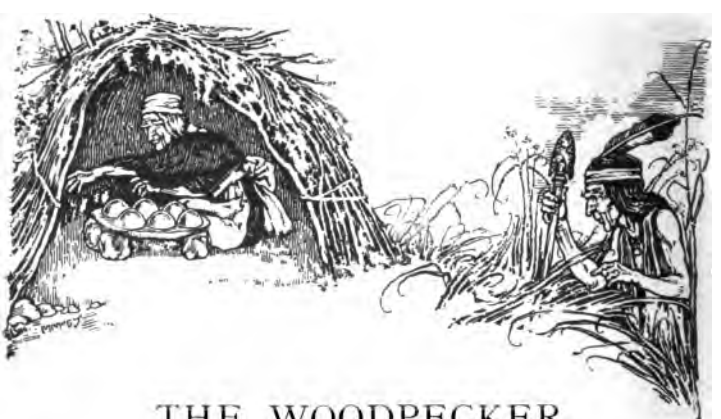
When they had brought out their rattles the Indians shouted and shook them and had a grand dance.

Soon clouds gathered in the sky and the bright face of the sun was entirely hidden. The wind blew. Rain fell fast, and thunder rumbled and roared.

But the Indians shook their rattles and shouted and hurrahed louder than ever.

This made the Great Spirit very angry. He did not drown them in the flood, however, but changed them all into rattlesnakes.

Nowadays, when they see a man coming they lift up their heads and move them about. That is the way snakes dance. And they shake their rattles just as Indians shake their rattles when they dance.[1]



THE WOODPECKER

Once upon a time a little old woman lived alone on the top of a hill. She had

[1] An Indian legend.

a very small house with a very large fireplace in it.

This little old woman always wore a plain black dress, a queer little red cap, and a big white apron with strings tied at the back.

She was a very selfish old woman and did not like to do anything to please other people.

One day she was baking some cakes for herself in her big fireplace. As she stood watching them to see that they turned a nice brown, a tired, hungry old man came up the hill and knocked at her door.

"Good morning, good woman," he said. "Will you give me one of your cakes? They look very nice and brown and I am very hungry."

The old woman looked at her cakes. They were such a beautiful brown and smelled so good that she wanted them all for herself.

"No," she said, "I will not give you any. I have nothing for you."

"If you will give me something to eat," said the old man, "I promise you your first wish shall come true."

The old woman did not want to give him anything, but she picked out a small cake. She looked at it and thought, "This cake is too large to give away."

She picked out a smaller cake, looked at it, and thought: "This cake is too large to give away. I shall give him a very, very small one."

She picked out the smallest cake she had. It was not much larger than the head of a pin. She looked at it and thought: "I cannot give such a beautiful brown cake away. I want it for myself."

So she put all the cakes away on a shelf and gave the poor, hungry old man a dry crust of bread.

He looked sorry, but said, "Thank you," and went slowly down the hill.

After he had gone, the little old woman

began to feel sorry that she had been so mean and selfish.

"Poor old man!" she thought. "He did look very tired and hungry."

She took down all the beautiful brown cakes from the shelf and looked at them. She had a great many. Surely she could have spared one for the hungry old man!

"If I were a bird," she said, "I would fly to him. I would ask him to forgive me, and to come back that I might give him all the cakes. I wish I were a bird."

As she spoke she grew smaller and smaller. The wind came in at the open door and blew her up the big chimney. When she came out at the top she was no longer an old woman. She was a bird, just as she had wished to be.

She still wore her plain black dress, queer little red cap, and big white apron with strings tied at the back. They had turned into feathers.

This bird pecks so often at the wood of trees

that it is called the woodpecker. You may see it now if you look for it in the woods.[1]

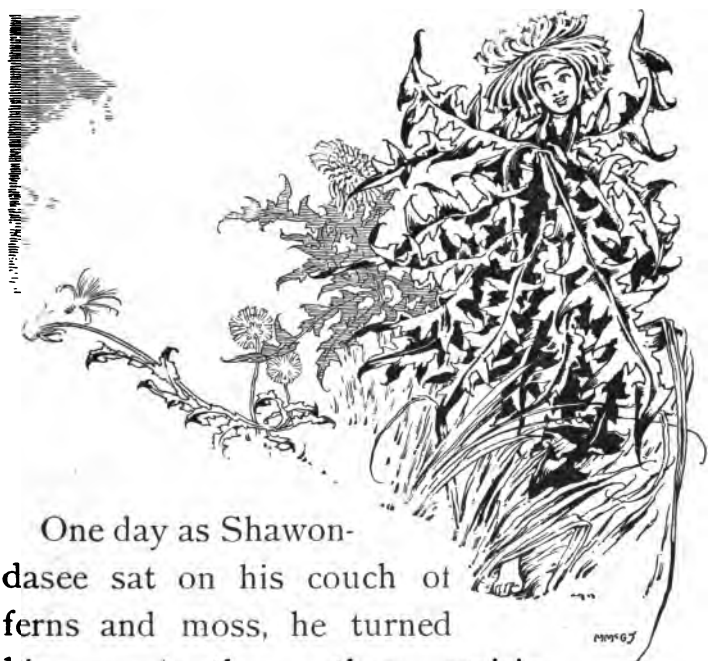
THE DANDELION MAIDEN

Shawondasee had a beautiful home in the warm and sunny southland. It was bright with flowers and had a carpet of cool green moss. The roof was formed by the drooping branches of tall trees. Flowering vines grew around the trees, making green pillars of their rough trunks. All day long the air was filled with the low, sweet sounds of rustling leaves, singing birds, and the music of flower bells and trumpets.

Shawondasee was so kind and gentle that every one loved him. It was he who sent

[1] An Indian folk story.

the robin, bluebird, swallow, and wild goose to the northland; who sent the melons and purple clusters of grapes. It was he, too, who filled the air with softness and brought sunshine and happiness to the northland.



One day as Shawondasee sat on his couch of ferns and moss, he turned his eyes to the northern prairie. There he saw a maiden standing among the waving grasses who was taller and more beautiful than any he had ever seen before.

Her dainty skirts were of the brightest green, and spread out in circles about her. Her merry little face peeped from under her hair of sunny gold.

Shawondasee looked in wonder upon her pretty face and bright garments. He longed to have her for his own. But this careless, dreamy South Wind was too lazy to go northward to where she stood. He would do no more than softly sigh and murmur his longings.

"Oh, my beautiful little prairie maiden, come to me in the warm and sunny southland. Come and live where I may always gaze upon you."

So he sighed and softly called to her, but the maiden paid no attention to him.

Day after day Shawondasee sat and watched her as she lifted her head up straight to catch the first sweet breath of morning. When the sun rose high in the heavens, she nodded in her jaunty way and danced with glee to the music of the

breezes. She was a bright and cheery little prairie maiden.

One day as Shawondasee gazed upon her, he saw that her golden tresses were gone. Her fluffy hair was as white as the whitest snowflake.

Shawondasee wandered about, sighing with grief. His breath came in puffs, making the prairie grasses tremble, and the white head of the maiden sway and nod.

Soon the prairie was covered with soft white down, blown here and there by the gentle breezes. The beautiful maiden had vanished.

Poor Shawondasee! He looked and looked, but could not find her. He roamed about in sorrow until the coldness of the air told him that North Wind was near.

From his home among the icebergs North Wind came hurrying and howling. His hair was covered with snow, and streamed behind him like a dark, frozen river. He heaped the snow in drifts upon the prairie, and covered the lakes and rivers with ice.

But by and by he returned to his home among the icebergs. Then again the prairie wore its soft cloak of green, and Shawondasee saw upon it many tall and slender maidens with golden tresses and garments of brightest green. They looked up; they smiled, and nodded their heads as if to welcome him.

These dainty little maidens had sprung up where the snowy down had fallen when Shawondasee was sighing and puffing in grief.[1]

A LEGEND OF CORN

A long time ago, when the Indians first came upon the earth, there lived one young man alone, far, far from any other.

[1] An Indian legend.

He lived upon roots, barks, and nuts, for he did not know the secret of fire.

This Indian became very lonesome. He wanted some one for company. He grew very tired of digging roots and gathering nuts. By and by he lost his appetite, and for several days lay dreaming in the sunshine.

When he awoke he saw something standing near him, and he was very much frightened.

But when he saw that it was a beautiful woman, his heart was glad; for she had long, light yellow hair, and was very unlike any Indian.

He asked her to come to him, but she would not; and when he tried to approach her, she seemed to go farther away.

Then he told her of his loneliness and begged her not to leave him.

"If you will do just as I tell you, you will always have me with you," said the woman.

He promised that he would do as she

said, and she led him to where there was some very dry grass.

"Now get two sticks and rub them together quickly, holding them in the grass," the woman said.

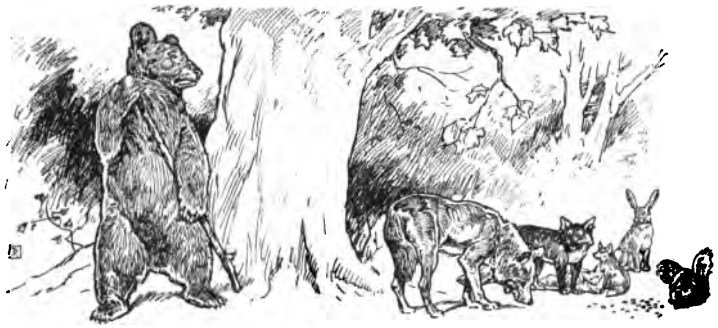
This the Indian did, and soon a spark flew out. The grass caught it, and quickly as an arrow flies, the ground was burned over.

Then the woman said, "When the sun sets, take me by the hair and drag me over the burned ground."

He did not like to do this, but she told him that wherever he dragged her, something like grass would spring up, and he would see her hair coming from between the leaves. Then the seeds would be ready for his use.

Then he did as she told him to do, and to this day, when they see the yellow silk on the cornstalk, the Indians know that the beautiful woman has not forgotten them.[1]

[1] An Indian legend.



WHY BEARS SLEEP ALL WINTER

Long, long ago, when the world was very young, Brother Bear did not sleep all winter as he does now. He trotted about all day, whether warm or cold, and was always teasing and playing tricks on the other animals.

Because he was big and strong he tried to make himself king of the country, and he ordered all the animals to do just whatever he wished them to do. He was very cruel to the smaller and weaker animals in every way, and was so strong and powerful that they dared not do or say anything to displease him.

One day late in the autumn, while Brother Bear was out hunting, all the other animals met together and decided that they would

not put up with his treatment any longer. Each had something to tell about the bear's mean tricks.

"Brother Bear is getting lazy," said Brother Squirrel. "He will not look for food when he can take it from one of us. He played such a mean trick on me the other day, too. I had gathered nuts and stored them away for the winter, when along came Brother Bear and pawed them all out and scattered them about on the ground. He thought it a joke, and only laughed because it vexed me."

"He is so rough," said Brother Fox. "One day last spring he was playing with one of my babies and rolled on him. He nearly killed the poor child."

"The only time that he is not doing harm is when he is asleep," said Brother Wolf. "I wish he would take a good long nap so that we could have a little comfort. I never feel safe while he is about."

"That makes me think of a plan for getting rid of him for a while," said Brother

Rabbit. "You know he is very fond of sleeping in the dark. He goes to sleep as soon as it is dark and gets up when the sun rises. Now, if it did not become light, he would not know when it was day. The next time he goes to sleep in that hole in

the old tree, we will stop up the hole so that he cannot get out. If he wakes up, he will think it is a long night and go to sleep again. Then we shall have a little peace and comfort and perhaps find another plan for keeping him still."

This plan was thought good; so the next night they all watched when Brother Bear crawled into the hollow tree to sleep. Then Brother Rabbit gave the signal, and the animals all turned in and carried stones, sticks, leaves, and mud, with which they stopped up the hole so that no light could get in and Brother Bear could not get out.

Sure enough, when morning came, Brother Bear did not know it and just slept on.

By and by he woke up, but since it was still dark, he turned over, saying sleepily, "It isn't daybreak yet."

The next time he woke, it was still dark, and he said: "I don't sleep well. I never used to waken during the night like this."

Then he rolled over and dropped asleep again.

There he slept all through the long winter, and might have been there to this day but that the animals began to think it was time for them to let him out.

"We have had a long spell of peace and

comfort," said Brother Fox; "but he may die of hunger if we keep him there too long. We had better pull away some of the stones and see how he is."

So Brother Fox and Brother Rabbit went to the old tree and quietly pulled away some of the stones and sticks so that the light could get into the hole. Then they ran off and hid so that Brother Bear should never know who shut him up.

The sun shone right in upon Brother Bear's face. He opened his eyes, and stretched and stretched.

"It is too warm in this hot, close place for me," he said. "I must have been sleeping a long time. How I long for a breath of fresh air. I must get out of here in a hurry."

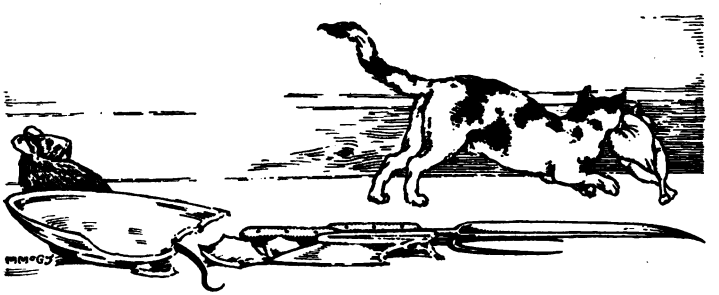
He stretched himself again and came out. He looked about him in surprise. The trees had fresh green leaves, the flowers were in bloom, and the air was soft and warm. It was spring.

"Well, well, well," said Brother Bear, "I

must have slept all winter. But I certainly did have a comfortable time. I will take a nap like that again some day."

Then he trotted off to hunt for something to eat.

Ever since that time when the first winter weather begins, Brother Bear finds a nice hole, protected from the cold, and there he rolls himself up like a ball and sleeps until the coming of spring.[1]



WHY CATS HATE RATS

Once upon a time a sprite gave a dinner party and invited everybody to it.

Puss had a fine time with all his friends; but he went away from the dinner hungry,

[1] A Negro folk story.

because there were so few things on the table that he liked to eat.

After dinner he chanced to pass a cupboard and smelled something in it that he thought very good. He scraped and scraped at the door until it opened, and there he saw a big boiled fowl. Now, Puss had never in his life eaten the meat of a fowl, and he was very hungry.

"It certainly smells delicious," said Puss, looking about to see if any one were near. "I must just try a little to see how it tastes."

He tried a small piece, and it tasted so good that he took the whole fowl and ran away with it.

The rat had come softly along and had seen Puss open the cupboard. When he saw the boiled fowl he wanted some of it. So he was very much annoyed when Puss disappeared with it.

By and by the sprite went to the cupboard, and saw that the fowl was missing.

"Do you know who has taken my fowl?" he asked some one standing near.

"No, indeed, I do not," was the answer.

He asked another and another; no one could tell.

He asked another, and still another, until he came to the rat, who said, "I saw Puss open the cupboard, take out the fowl, and run off with it."

"Which way did he go?" asked the angry sprite.

"Over that way, through the cornfield," said the rat, pointing out the way.

Then the sprite rushed off to hunt for Puss.

When Puss thought that he was at a safe distance, he put down the fowl and prepared to have a good feast. No sooner had he put it on the ground than he saw the sprite rushing toward him. He took up the fowl again and tried to swallow it whole, but could not. It stuck in his throat and choked him.

The sprite cried, as he came nearer, "Give me my fowl, you thief."

Puss said, " Mew."

The sprite caught hold of him and shook him.

Puss said, " Mew."

He had had a good voice before, but the fowl scraped his throat and hurt it, and from that time till this he has said only, " Mew, mew, mew."

When the sprite found that he could not get the fowl, nor make Puss speak, he was so angry that he beat him. He beat and beat and beat until he thought Puss was dead.

Then he left him lying by the side of the road and went back to his friends.

But Puss was not dead. He was so worn out and sore that he thought it best to make believe he was dead. So he lay quite still by the roadside for a long time.

The other animals returning from the party saw him lying there. They laughed and pointed at him, saying, "Look at Puss, the old thief!"

That is the reason Puss always hangs his head and runs away when he sees any one. And that is the reason, too, that Puss hates rats and kills them when he gets a chance, because it was the rat that told the story about the boiled fowl.[1]

[1] A negro folk story.

THE THUNDER BIRD

When dark thunder clouds pass over the earth and the rumble and roar of the thunder is heard, the Eskimos tell their children that the Great White Bird is flapping his wings.

This enormous bird is supposed to live far away in the southern sky, and it has wide, spreading wings which may be put on or taken off.

Sometimes the Great King of the Sky gives this bird permission to put on wings and fly about the sky. He always warns the bird not to go far away from its home and not to fly too low, for if it did so it might harm the people on the earth.

After one of these trips the bird returns

home and carefully puts away its wings so that they will be ready for the next flight.

The Eskimos think that the roar and crash of the thunder is the sound made by the flapping of this bird's wings as it flies about the sky.

As thunder storms always come when the long winter is breaking up, the Eskimos look upon them as a good sign and welcome them joyfully.[1]

THE ORIGIN OF SWALLOWS

In the far north the winter is long and dark, and the summer very, very short.

All through the winter the sun is entirely hidden from view, but in the spring it is

[1] An Eskimo myth.

seen for a short time each day. Each day its visit grows longer, until, in the summer, it is never out of sight, but circles round and round just above the horizon.

It is warmer then. The snow melts, and the ice in the rivers breaks up and is carried out to sea.

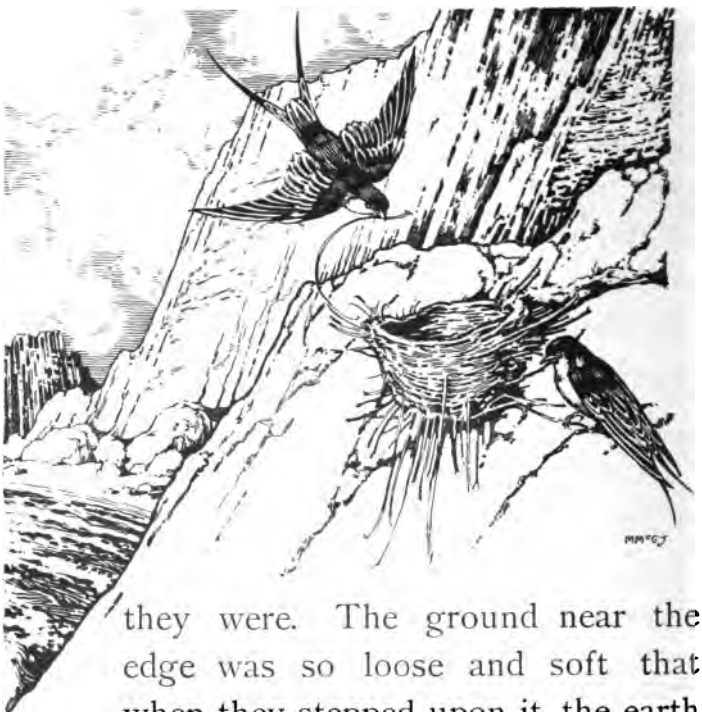
Then the children are happy and spend all their spare time in hunting the few hardy flowers that grow in that cold land.

Although the summer is so short, many birds build their nests and lay their eggs on the high, rocky cliffs along the seashore. Among these birds are some that we know well, — the swallows.

The Eskimos tell their children a story of the first swallows and how they made their nests.

They say that long, long ago two children were playing together on the top of a high cliff. They were gathering sticks and grass, and plastering them together with mud to make tiny houses.

At first the children were very careful that they should not go too near the edge of the cliff. But after a time they became so interested in their play that they forgot where



they were. The ground near the edge was so loose and soft that when they stepped upon it, the earth crumbled away and the children fell headlong over the cliff.

They would have been dashed to pieces on

the rocks below if the Great Spirit, who watches over all, had not seen and pitied them. He turned them into little birds, and they spread out their wings and flew away.

They did not forget their childish occupation, however, for even to this day the swallows come to the cliff during the short summer and build their houses, or nests, of grass and sticks plastered together with mud.[1]

THE OWL AND THE RAVEN

At one time the owl and the raven were the very best of friends. They thought so much of each other that one was always trying to do something to give the other pleasure.

[1] An Eskimo legend.

Once the owl's dress began to look shabby, and the raven made her a beautiful new one of spotted white and black. This pleased the owl very much, and in return she made the raven a fine pair of boots of whalebone.

After finishing the boots she began to make a white dress for the raven, who always liked to be dressed in white.

When the owl had the dress ready to try on, the raven would not stand still long enough to be fitted, but wanted to hop about.

The owl became impatient, and said: "Stand still! Don't jump so, or I cannot make this properly."

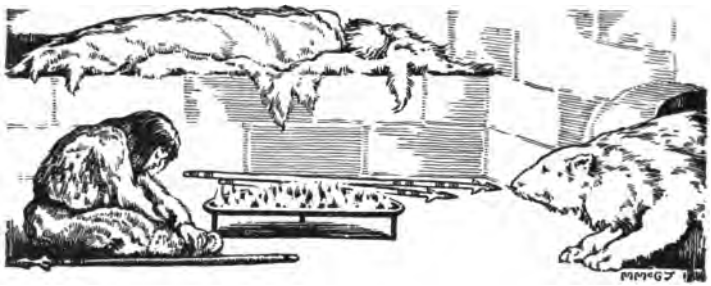
But the raven kept right on hopping.

This made the owl so angry that at last she lost her temper, and, picking up a lamp, threw the oil all over the raven.

The raven cried, "Caw, caw, caw," and flew away to a tree, where she tried to get the black oil off her dress, but could not.

Since that day the raven has been black as night.[1]

[1] An Eskimo folk story.



THE ROBIN REDBREAST

Often during the long, cold winter, the Eskimos, grown people and children, gather around the fire in their queer little houses to listen to stories of seal hunting, or other exciting sport.

One story which the children love, and ask for over and over again, is about a little bird which visits some parts of their country during the short summer.

They say that a great many years ago there was only one fire in the whole northland. Of course, this fire was very precious. An old man and his little son took turns in caring for it, and kept it burning day and night. They knew that if the fire went out they would freeze to death.

Their one great enemy was the white bear. He would have been very glad to see them die, so that he might have the northland all to himself. He was always watching the fire and hoping that something would happen to put it out.

One day the old man became very ill and there was no one to help his little son.

For many days and nights the boy bravely kept the fire burning and cared for his sick father. But at last he became so tired and sleepy that he could scarcely stand.

The white bear laughed to himself when he saw that the boy would soon have to give up. He was sure that at last he was to have the whole northland to himself.

That night the poor little boy could keep awake no longer. As he was sitting by his father's side, his head fell slowly forward and he was fast asleep.

Then the white bear ran to the fire, beat it with his great wet paws, and rolled upon it until, as he supposed, he had put it all out.

After that he went off to his den, chuckling over what he had done.

A little gray robin was flying near. She watched until the bear had gone away, then flew down and searched with her sharp little eyes until she found a tiny spark of fire among the ashes.

She set to work to fan this spark into a blaze. She went down close to the spark and patiently fanned it with her little wings.

By and by her breast was burned red, but still she fanned until a fine blaze was started.

Now it was plain that the northland could never be the white bear's; and all that he could do was to go farther back in his den and growl.

When the little boy awoke in the morning he found the fire burning brightly and the poor, tired, little robin with her breast scorched red.

Ever since that day, robins have had red breasts, and Eskimo children love and care for them in memory of the one that kept burning the first fire of the northland.[1]

[1] An Eskimo myth.

WHY THE MOON FOLLOWS THE SUN

When the world was young, the sun and moon were brother and sister and lived on the earth.

One night they were playing games in the dark with some other children, when the sister, Malina, was teased by one of the boys. She was so angry that she smeared her hands with soot from the lamp and rubbed them over his face, that she might know him by daylight and have her brother punish him.

When she found that it was her own brother, Anninga, who had teased her, and whom she had smeared with lamp soot, she was frightened and ran away.

Anninga followed, and they ran on and on, until they came to the place where the earth and sky meet. Then they both flew upward to the sky.

Malina became the sun and Anninga became the moon, but being unable to fly so high as his sister, he runs around the sun all the time in the hope of sometime surprising and catching her.

When he is tired and hungry he harnesses four huge dogs to a sledge, and, leaving his house, he hunts seals for several days. Then he cannot be seen in the sky.

On his return he eats so much that he soon grows into a full round moon.

If you look at him on a clear night, you will see the spots of lamp soot which his sister smeared on his face.[1]

[1] An Eskimo myth.

NATURE MYTHS
FROM ASIATIC SOURCES

M M eg Jamieson

WHY THE SUN TRAVELS SLOWLY

A great many years ago the sun used to race through the sky very fast. Men complained that they could not get enough daylight in which to hunt game, go fishing, or do any other necessary daily work.

A fisherman named Mani determined to see what he could do about it. He decided to go to the sun and teach him to run in a regular course, instead of doing as he pleased and going across the heavens at any pace he chose.

So he plaited long ropes to make a snare in which to catch the sun. Then he got into his canoe and sailed far out on the sea until he reached the very edge of the earth, where the sun rose from beneath the ocean. There he set his snare.

Soon the sun began to rise, and before he knew it he was fairly in the snare. Then Mani pulled the ropes tight, and the sun was compelled to stand still.

Mani kept the ropes drawn tight while he made his complaint and told the sun what was expected of him.

When the sun promised to be more careful in his traveling across the sky, Mani allowed him to proceed on his way. But he wisely refused to take off all the ropes, for he wished to keep the sun in fear.

So the sun was obliged to go more slowly, and the day has since then been very much longer, which is a great gain to the people on the earth.

These ropes may still be seen hanging from the sun at dawn, and also when he sinks into the ocean at night.

Perhaps when you see them you call them the sun's rays, or you may say that the sun is drawing water.[1]

[1] A Hawaiian legend.

THE CAUSE OF TIDES

Some little Filipino children were playing on the sand at the seashore.

The tide was very low, and the beach stretched out like a great sheet of paper, smooth and white.

The children ran around with bare feet on the soft sand, making funny little tracks wherever they went. When they became tired of this play, they laid out a tiny village with sand houses and streets of shells and stones. They dug caves and wells and filled them with water. Then they walked along the shore gathering pretty colored shells.

By and by they returned to their little sand village, only to find that the sea had stolen

up and washed everything smooth again, and they had a very small stretch of sand on which to play.

"What makes the water come up so high?" asked one of the children.

"Perhaps," replied the other, "there is a great sea king somewhere at the bottom of the ocean who makes it rise and fall. I wish he would not make it rise so high when we want to play on the beach."

An old man, passing by, heard what the children were saying and stopped to speak to them.

"Did you never hear of the big crab that lives at the bottom of the ocean?" he asked.

"A big crab!" cried the children. "What do you mean? Is it a story? Oh, do tell it to us, please!"

"Come and sit down here away from the water and I will tell you about the crab that makes the water rise and fall."

The children eagerly did as they were told, and the old man began his story.

"Way, way down at the bottom of the sea, there is a great big hole. In this hole lives an enormous crab, larger than a hundred buffaloes.

"This crab does not stay in the hole all the time. Once every day and once every night, it comes up to the surface, looking like a large island when seen from afar.

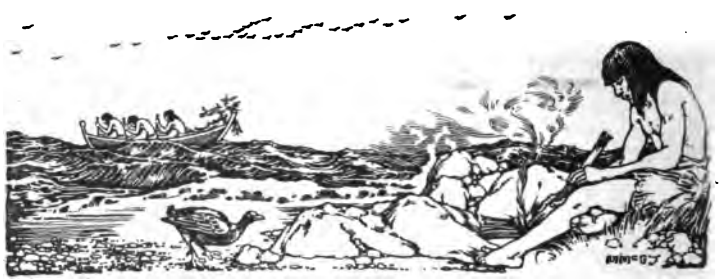
"It moves slowly and, on reaching a good smooth beach, crawls up on the land. Then the waters pour down into the hole and the tide is low on all the islands.

"This great crab is round and flat and is covered with a strong blue-black shell. Its big goggling eyes stick far out from its head, and it looks all legs and claws as it crawls up on the beach in its queer sidewise fashion.

"By and by it gets tired of the shore and crawls back into the water again. As it goes down into its hole, the waters rush out, and the tide rises on the shores of the islands, just as water rises in a basin when you put your hands into it.

"When you first came here to play, the crab was up on some beach. Now he has gone back into his hole at the bottom of the ocean. That is why the waters have risen and covered this sandy beach."

"Thank you," said the children. "We thought that there must be a king in the ocean. We shall call him King Crab. We hope he will never come up on this beach. Good-by, and thank you for the story."[1]



THE SECRET OF FIRE

Mani and his three brothers were fishermen of Hawaii and often went with their canoe, nets, and fishing tackle to a little island called Cocoanut Island.

[1] A Filipino folk story.

While shivering at sea in damp and chilly weather, they would sometimes see the gleam of fires among the rocks on the little island.

They knew that these fires were lighted by mud hens, and that these mud hens alone had the secret of making fire. The men longed to enjoy the comfort and luxury of that great secret which had been withheld from them. But as often as they returned to the shore the fires disappeared and the hens scattered about among the bushes.

Mani was so determined to get at the secret that one day he stayed ashore hidden in the bushes, while his three brothers went fishing.

The mud hens saw the canoe start out and said to one another: "There are only three men in the canoe. One must have stayed on shore. We will not make our fires to-day."

So Mani lay in the bushes all day waiting patiently, but no fires appeared.

The next day he went with his brothers in the canoe and the fires on the island gleamed as usual.

"I must manage to trick them in some way, so that I can take them by surprise," said he. "In that way I may be able to get the secret from them."

He therefore made a straw man and put this in his seat in the canoe and placed a paddle in its hands to make it look as if it were paddling.

The three brothers sat in their usual places

and rowed the canoe out to sea, while Mani lay hidden in the bushes to watch the mud hens.

The birds saw the canoe go out and, thinking that the four brothers had all gone fishing, they built their fires. After cooking some fish and roots they gathered about their fires to enjoy themselves.

Mani now made a rush and caught one of the hens.

"Tell me how you started that fire," he cried.

When the hen found that she could not get away, she tried to deceive him, for she did not wish the secret to leave her family.

"Rub the leaf of the taro with a stick and you will have fire," she said.

Mani did so, but no fire came.

Then the bird, hoping to gain time, said: "Use a banana leaf and a stick. Rub them very hard."

Still there was no fire.

The hen said, "Try a sugar-cane leaf and you will have fire."

Mani did this, and yet there was no fire.

Then he was very angry and threatened to wring the bird's neck if she did not tell him the truth.

The hen was so frightened that she cried, "Rub two sticks together."

This Mani did, but as the sticks were damp, he got no fire.

He was so angry now that he caught hold of the hen's neck to carry out his threat.

The poor bird begged him to wait, saying, "I will tell you the truth. If you kill me, you will gain nothing, for the secret of fire will die with me. Use dry sticks, and you will have no trouble getting fire."

Mani put down the hen, and this time used dry sticks.

A bright little spark flew out.

In spite of his success, Mani was so vexed with the poor hen that he rubbed the top of her head and beak with the sticks until all the feathers were gone and the skin was bright red.

So all the children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren of this mud hen have red heads and beaks even to this day.

The long furrows that we see on the stem of the taro, banana, and sugar cane were made by Mani when he rubbed them so hard to try and get fire from them.[1]

THE STORY OF A BIRD

There is a bird in the southern part of China which is often heard, but is very seldom seen. It is shaped like our brown thrush, but is a little larger. Its color is jet-black, and it has but one loud, clear, double note sounding like Ko-o-o-o.

The Chinese tell this story of the bird.

Long ago, no one knows how long, two

[1] A Hawaiian legend.

beautiful young girls went out from their home on a lovely moonlight night. They walked towards the hills to see the blossoms of the strawberry tree, which open their petals only at night.

This tree is a small evergreen, with white flowers and fruit that is somewhat like our strawberry in shape and color.

As the two girls walked along, chattering gayly together, a great tiger suddenly sprang between them. He caught Ah Ko in his powerful jaws and carried her into the depths of the forest.

Poor Ah Saw was so frightened that for a time she could do nothing but gaze stupidly at the spot where Ah Ko had disappeared.

At last she ran wildly into the forest, calling loudly as she ran, "Ah Ko, Ah Ko, my sister, where are you? Ah Ko-Ko-o-o!"

In the form of a bird she is still roaming the woods in the south of China, continually calling, "Ah Ko-Ko-o-o!" [1]

[1] A Chinese folk story.

A LIZARD'S FRIENDSHIP

A little girl, playing in the woods near her father's cottage, found a small gray egg, which she kept and watched for many days.

After a while a lizard hatched out from the egg and was cared for by the child. She kept it concealed among some rocks, fearing some harm might come to it. It shared her food, and was for many years her companion. It grew large, rugged, and ugly, while she grew tall, fair, and charming. But the two were always close friends and seemed to understand each other's speech.

By and by the time came for the maiden to be married, and now her only trouble was in planning how to take the lizard secretly to her future home. She knew that the loving though ugly creature whom she had never dared to take into her father's

house, could have no welcome among the strangers to whom she was going. She feared that she could not find a good place for it to live near her.

She explained all these difficulties to the lizard, told it how sad she should be if separated from her old friend, and asked whether it would go with her and try its fortunes, or stay where it was.

The lizard decided to go with her and get along the best it could. It curled itself into a little basket, which she took with her to her husband's house.

There she placed it in the drain near the house, so that she could see it often. She fed it daily from her own plate, and talked to it whenever they could be alone together.

One day her mother-in-law noticed that after each meal the girl always took away bits of food. She watched to see what was done with it, and soon found the girl feeding the great ugly lizard.

In spite of the girl's tears and coaxing, the

mother-in-law insisted that such a terrible creature could not remain near the house. She said it must either be killed or sent away.

The poor girl told the lizard that its life was in danger if it did not go away at once.

The lizard seemed to understand, and as the girl bent down to stroke it, it shed a shining tear, which became a pearl in her hand. Then it turned away towards the woods and was never seen again.

The girl always wore the pearl in memory of the friendship of the faithful lizard.[1]

THE FIRST MOSQUITOES

Once upon a time, many years ago, there was a hobgoblin who had his home far away in the mountains.

[1] A Chinese folk story.

This hobgoblin was somewhat like a man in shape, but he was very large and was covered with hair. His skin was like that of a bear, it was so hairy. He had but one eye, and that was in the middle of his forehead, and as large as the cover of a kettle.

This creature was very troublesome to the Japanese people, for he was in the habit of catching, killing, and eating everything that came in his way.

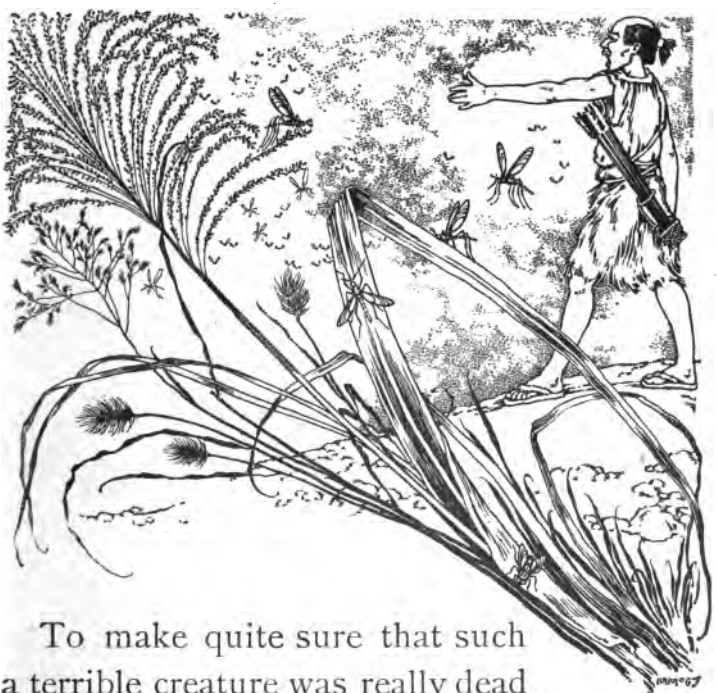
The people were afraid to go far into the mountains to hunt, for, though the one-eyed monster had been shot at many times, not an arrow had taken effect upon him.

Now it happened one day that a hunter approached the cave of this animal without knowing where he was. While he was walking along looking for game, he was astonished to see something glaring at him through the undergrowth of the forest.

He went nearer to see what it was, and discovered it to be the big, hairy, fierce-looking hobgoblin. The hunter was so frightened

that he did not know what to do. He got up courage enough, however, to draw an arrow from his quiver, and, fitting it in his bow, he stood ready to shoot.

As the creature came nearer, the man took a steady aim at his one eye, and being a good shot, hit it fairly in the center. To his great surprise and joy, the hobgoblin at once fell over, dead.



To make quite sure that such a terrible creature was really dead

and would not come to life again, the hunter made a great bonfire over his body and burned it, bones and all.

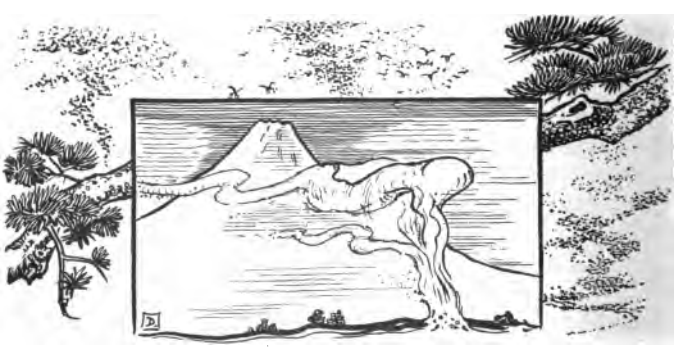
When this was done he took the ashes in his hands and scattered them in the air, so as to make sure that the monster was destroyed.

Now what do you think happened?

As the ashes were tossed into the air they became mosquitoes, gnats, and flies!

However, no one should grumble at these little insects; for the trouble they cause us is not so bad as that of having a one-eyed, man-eating monster lying in wait for us.[1]

[1] A Japanese folk story.



THE WHITE HARES

In Japan there are many pure-white hares with coal-black ears. When the little children of Japan ask, "Mother, why are the hare's ears black?" this is what the mother tells them: —

In the days of long ago there was a large house on the top of a hill. Here six little people lived who were always beautifully dressed in pure white. They were never happy, for they were fretful, and were always quarreling among themselves.

Many wondered from where these little people came and who they were, but the little people themselves did not know. They often talked about it, and tried to

think of the places where they had been before they came to the house on the hill. Each of the six was sure he was right about it, and so they would quarrel about that.

One day when their disputes were more noisy than usual, the king of the animals came to them and said: "Oh, you bad little people! You wicked people! Do you want to know from where you came? Listen and I will tell you. Away up above the stars the sky children were once pelting each other with snowflakes, and some of the snowflakes fell from the sky. They fell swiftly between the stars and the branches of the trees, till at last they lay on the green earth. As it would be a pity to waste anything that falls from the sky, the snowflakes were turned into white hares, the whitest, softest little hares that ever were seen. You are those little white hares, and if you were gentle and good you would always be white. You who live in this world that belongs to

me should not quarrel, but should love one another. What is it you are making such a noise about?"

With these words he caught up a stick from the fire and beat each of the six in turn until their ears were as black as night.

The hares were so frightened and ashamed that they ran away and made new homes for themselves in the woods.

When you see a white hare with black ears you may know that he is one of this

same family. He was once pure white, but his ears were blackened by the charred stick with which he was beaten.[1]

WHY THE COCK CANNOT FLY

A long time ago the cock's home was in the sky.

When this earth was made and the Creator had returned to the heavens, he sent down the cock to see whether the world were good to look upon.

The cock was told that he must not linger on the earth, but must return to the sky at once and report how the world appeared to him.

So, down through the mist and clouds,

[1] A Japanese folk story.

the cock traveled, until he reached the new world. He found every hill and valley full of bright flowers and budding trees, which smiled upon him in the warm sunlight. As he passed along, the blossoms bent their dainty heads and rang their colored bells until the fragrant air was full of music. The stately trees waved their arms above him and scattered their leaves softly at his feet.

With wondering eyes the cock looked upon this bright new world, and was so pleased with its beauty that he quite forgot that he ought to return at once to the sky.

Day after day went by, and still he stayed. Each night he promised himself to tarry no longer, but when the morning sun shone down upon the earth, and the flowers danced around him in the summer wind, he decided to stay yet another day.

At last, after a long, long time, he attempted to fly back to his home in the sky. Over and over again he tried; but he found that he could fly only a little way, and that

then he would drop back to the earth. He had lost the power to fly high.

Then he knew that this was a punishment for his disobedience, and that he must ever after remain on the earth.[1]

THE FOX AND THE TIGER

The bear is considered by the Japanese to be the king of the beasts, but the fox is honored as the wisest of all animals, being able to outwit even the bear.

One day the animals of Japan heard that the tiger, who was king in his own country, was coming to their country to fight with them.

They were very much afraid that he would

[1] A Japanese folk story.

prove too powerful for the bear, so the fox was ordered to meet the tiger, and, if possible, to outwit him by cunning. If the fox failed, then the bear was to try his strength.

When the tiger reached Japan, he went to an immense forest, a thousand miles in diameter.

The fox met him and said, "How do you do? I am very glad to see you. I have heard that you are the king of animals in your country. Is it true, Great Sir?"

The tiger replied with a fierce roar, "Yes, it is true, and it is also true that no one in the world can run so fast as I can."

"I have heard that you are a very wonderful animal," said the fox. "People say that I am a fair runner. We might arrange to run a race together while you are in this country. Will you race with me, King Tiger?"

"Yes, I will race with you," replied the tiger. "Of course you can hardly expect to win; yet, if you wish it, I will race. Let us start at once."

heat and the dust, he found that his clothes had become very much soiled. He stopped, therefore, by the side of a river, to wash them before entering the next city.

He threw them over a tall mallow plant in the hot sun, that they might dry quickly. Then he sat down in the shade to rest.

When the clothes were taken away, it was found that the mallow plant had been changed into a magnificent geranium, a plant which then for the first time came into existence.[1]

THE HARE IN THE MOON

A hare, a fox, and a monkey once agreed to live together and help one another. They

[1] A Mohammedan legend.

were very good friends, and their lives ran on smoothly and well for many years.

One day an old man came to their home.

"I am very tired and hungry," he said. "May I come into your house and rest for a little while?"

The hare, the fox, and the monkey welcomed him, and, taking him into their house, tried in every way to make him comfortable.

The man seemed very much pleased by their warm welcome. He sat and talked with them for a long time, asking them questions about their life together and their friendship for one another.

By and by he said: "My good friends, you have been so kind to me that I am going to ask you another favor. I have been very hungry all day, and have had no success in hunting. Can you give me something to eat before I leave you?"

"We have nothing in the house that a man could eat," said the fox, "but stay here

and rest, and I will gladly go into the forest and get some food for you."

So the man stayed with the hare and the monkey while the fox went out in search of food for him.

After some time, the fox returned with a little fruit, which he had gathered from a tree; but he had not been able to find anything else that a man could eat.

Then the monkey said, "I will go into the forest and see what I can find."

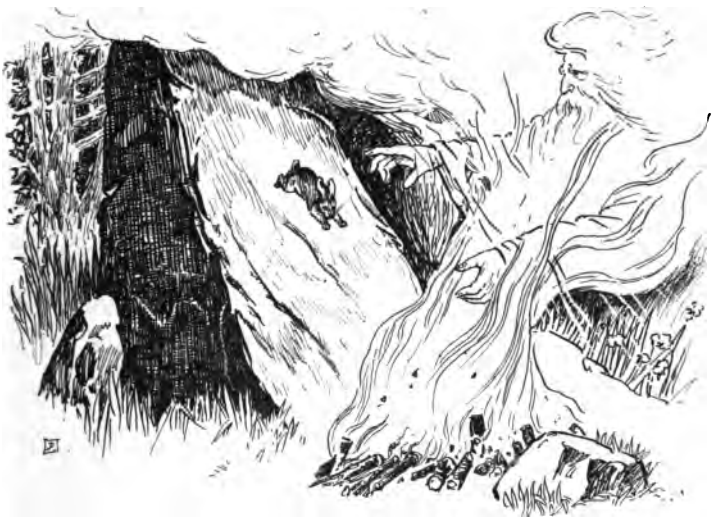
When he returned he brought a little more fruit, but had found nothing else. The hungry man ate it eagerly; yet there was so little of it that he was still hungry when he had finished.

Then the hare said, "Stay with us a little longer, and I will go into the forest and search for food. Perhaps I may be more successful."

He was gone a long time, but was not even so successful as his friends. At last he was obliged to return without anything

whatever for the man to eat. This made him very sad, for he was a kind little animal and wished to do something to show his goodwill to the man.

Suddenly he said, "Build a fire and I will give you some food."



The man was surprised, but went out and built a fire in the shelter of a great rock.

When a good blaze was started, the hare went up on the rock. Then he jumped from it into the fire, that he might himself become food for his guest.

But before the flames touched him, the old man, who was really Indra, the king of all, caught him in his hands.

"You have indeed given a great gift, dear little hare," he cried, "for you have given yourself. I will take the gift so cheerfully given. Hereafter you shall be mine, and shall live with me in the sky."

Indra took the hare to the sky and placed him in the moon, so that every one on the earth might see him and hear the story of his kindness and unselfishness.

He may still be seen if you look at the spots on the surface of the moon in its first quarter.[1]

[1] A Buddhist legend.

THE NIGHT BIRD

Once upon a time all the birds of the air agreed to assemble to choose one of their number to be king and leader.

They thought it best that they should have some one to make their laws for them, so that there should be better order among them.

At the meeting each bird was to do something to show that he was fitted to be king.

The owl was such a wise-looking bird that he was chosen to be the judge and to select the one who was to hold the important position of king of all the birds.

The day of the contest was clear and beautiful, and the birds hastened from fields and woods to the meeting place. The lark, the crow, the cardinal bird, and the parrot were the first to arrive.

Behind them came the chicken, fluttering its wings and trying hard to keep up with the others.

Soon all the birds were assembled except the owl. They waited and waited, but he did not come.

Then the birds began to quarrel among themselves, each one claiming the right to be the king. The falcon declared that he and no other should have the position. But as the other birds would not agree to this, he left them and has ever since been their enemy.

After a great deal of talking and quarreling the birds decided to vote, and their choice fell on the fork-tailed shrike because of his good behavior and his long crest, and also on account of his beautiful voice.

When their choice was finally made and they had given the new king power to rule over them and to make their laws, they declared that the owl should be punished for his neglect in not coming to this important meeting.

"If he had come at the appointed time," said the lark, "there would have been no quarreling and no trouble with the falcon. The owl should be punished for causing us so much trouble."

Each bird had something to say about what form the punishment should take.

The king listened to them all, and then declared, "Any one who sees the owl and does not attack him shall be expelled from our company and looked upon as a public enemy."

And that is why the owl does not go about in the daytime, but only at night, when all the other birds are fast asleep in their nests.[1]

[1] A Malayan folk story.

WHY THE BEE BUZZES

Once upon a time, in the days of long ago, the king of the birds called two birds and a bee to him.

"Are you ready to go on a long journey?" he asked.

"Yes, O most high and mighty king," answered they; "we are always ready to carry out your commands."

"I want you to go down to the earth for me," said their king. "Find out which flesh makes the best food. You may be gone a year and a day. At the end of that time return to me and be ready to tell me what you have found out."

The birds and the bee started at once. When they reached the earth, one went to the fields, one to the woods, and one to a swamp.

For a year and a day they searched the earth, trying all kinds of flesh. At the end of that time they met at the appointed place to talk it over before returning to the king. They could not agree upon any one kind of flesh.

"I have found worms to be the best food," said one bird.

"I think insects are much better," said the other bird.

"Neither of you is right," said the bee.

Then they began to quarrel, and no one would give in to the others.

At last the bee said, "Never mind what we really like. We must go back and tell the king something. Man is proud and disagreeable. He has shown no friendship for us and I do not like him. Let us tell the king that man's flesh is the best for food."

As the two birds could offer no better suggestion, they agreed to do this, and started back to their king.

On the way they met the storm king, who

said, "Well, my friends, what flesh have you found to be the most delicious?"

"That of man," replied the three.

Now this did not please the storm king at all. He had a great admiration for man and

did not wish to have him harmed. So he said, "Friends, you are mistaken. You must not carry that report to the king. Did any of you try the flesh of the snake?"

"No," said they, "we forgot about the snake."

"Well, well, what a mistake you might have made if I had not happened to meet you," said the storm king. "You should have tasted it; for a more delicate food you have never had in your lives. You had better go back and try some."

"No," cried the three. "We were to be gone a year and a day, and to-day our time is up. We must return to the king."

"Then take my word for it," said the storm king. "I am sure that your king will be pleased if you tell him that."

The two birds were willing, but the bee would not agree.

"Man has not been kind to me," it said, "and now he must suffer. I shall tell the king man's flesh is best, whatever you may say."

They talked and talked and talked, but the bee would not give in. At last the birds became so angry that they cut out the bee's tongue to save any further trouble. Then they all went before their king.

"So you have returned at last," said the king. "I have been expecting you for several days. Tell me, what flesh makes the most delicious food?"

"That of the snake," replied the birds, quickly.

The bee flew up to the king and tried to speak, but could make only a queer buzzing noise that sounded like "Z—z—z"

"The bee is trying to tell you the same thing that we told you, but it has lost its voice," said the birds.

"Z—z—z," buzzed the bee.

Since that time the bee has not been able to speak, but can only buzz.[1]

[1] A Mongolian folk story.

THE WOODPECKER'S JOKE

One day a woodpecker was eating honey high up in the branches of a tree.

On the ground below, sat a frog watching and wishing for the feast.

At last, finding that the bird was not going to offer him any, he said, "Could you not spare a little of that honey for me?"

"Well, come up here," said the woodpecker, "and you shall have all you want."

"But how shall I get up?" said the frog. "I cannot fly and I cannot climb."

The woodpecker thought for a moment, and then said, "Take hold of that vine and I will pull you up."

The frog found a little bucket near by.

He fastened it to the vine, got in, and called, "Now pull!"

The woodpecker raised the frog slowly to the level of the branch where the honey was. Then before the frog could hop out of the bucket he let him down with a run, not only disappointing him but shaking him severely.

The woodpecker thought it a great joke and laughed and laughed; but the frog went away in a rage and began to plan how he could punish the woodpecker for his mean joke.

By and by a happy thought came to him and he drank up all the water of the rivers and lakes.

Now there was great trouble and distress in the world. Birds and beasts were soon dying of thirst, the woodpeckers among them. A meeting of the animals was held, and it was agreed that the frog must be made to laugh, so that the water would pour out of his mouth and there would again be plenty for all the birds and beasts.

So the animals took turns in playing jester before the frog, who sat and watched their antics without a smile. The monkey did some wonderful swinging by his tail and the kangaroo performed many feats in jumping, but still the frog sat gravely blinking his eyes.

At last the eel danced on the tip of his tail. That sight was too much for the frog, and he laughed until he split his sides. Then the water came forth with a rush. Indeed there was so much water that many of the animals were drowned. And since that time the rivers and lakes have been full of water.[1]

[1] An Australian folk story.

NATURE MYTHS
FROM EUROPEAN SOURCES

MM^cG JACKSON

THE TWELVE MONTHS

There was once a woman who had two daughters, Helen and Marouckea.

Helen was not pretty and was always cross and disagreeable, but she was the favorite child of her mother and was spoiled by both her mother and sister.

Marouckea was very pretty and sweet tempered. All the hard work of the house fell to her share. She cleaned the rooms, cooked, washed, sewed, brought in the hay, and milked the cows. All this she did without help, and yet she never complained.

Helen, meanwhile, did nothing but dress herself in her best clothes and go to one amusement after another.

One day in the middle of winter Helen wanted some wood violets.

"Sister," she cried to Marouckea, "you must go up the mountain and find me some violets. I want some to put in my dress. They must be fresh and sweet scented — do you hear?"

"But, my dear sister," said the poor girl, "who ever heard of violets blooming in the snow?"

"I must have them," said Helen. "Be off with you, and don't come back till you have found them."

Marouckea made her way to the mountain. The snow was deep and there were no paths. She wandered about and lost her way. She was hungry, she shivered with the cold, but she dared not go home.

Suddenly she saw a light in the distance, and climbed towards it, till she reached the top of the mountain. Upon the highest peak was a large fire. Around the fire were twelve blocks of stone on which sat twelve

strange beings. The first three had white hair, three were not quite so old, three were young and handsome, and three were still younger.

There they all sat looking at the fire. They were the twelve months of the year. The great January was placed on a stone higher than the others. His hair and beard were white as snow, and in his hand he held a wand.

At first Marouckea was afraid, but after a while she grew braver, and drawing near she said, "Men, may I warm myself at your fire? I am very cold."

The great January raised his head and said: "What brings you here, my daughter? What do you seek?"

"I am looking for violets," said she.

"This is not the season for violets," said January. "Do you not see the snow everywhere?"

"I know," said Marouckea, "but my sister Helen told me to come to this mountain and

get her some violets. I dare not return without them. I pray you, tell me where they are to be found."

The great January arose and went over to the youngest of the months, and placing the wand in his hand, said, "Brother March, you take the highest place."

March obeyed, at the same time waving the wand over the fire. The flames rose towards the sky, the snow began to melt, the trees and shrubs began to bud, and the grass became green. It was spring and the meadows were blue with violets.

"Gather them quickly, Marouckea," said March.

When she had gathered a bunch, she thanked the kings and ran home.

Helen and her mother were amazed at the sight of the flowers, the scent of which filled the house.

"Where did you get them?" asked Helen.

"Under the trees on the mountain," replied Marouckea.

The next day Helen said, "Run, and fetch me some strawberries from the mountain. They must be very sweet and ripe."

"But who ever heard of strawberries ripening in the snow?" cried Marouckea.

"Not another word; off with you," cried Helen. "Do not come back until you get them."

Again the poor girl went to the mountain. She wandered about in the snow until she was nearly frozen and ready to die from hunger. Suddenly she saw the light at the top of the mountain just as she had seen it before. Joyfully she climbed towards it, until she stood before the fire around which sat the twelve months.

"Men," she said, "may I warm myself at your fire? I am chilled by the winter cold."

The great January raised his head and said: "What brings you here, my daughter? What do you seek?"

"I am looking for strawberries," said Marouckea.

"This is not the season for strawberries," said January. "Strawberries do not grow in the snow."

"I know," said the girl, sadly, "but my sister Helen sent me to bring strawberries, and I dare not return without them. Pray, good men, tell me where to find them."

The great January arose and placing the wand in the hand of a month opposite to him said, "Brother June, you take the highest place."

June obeyed, and as he waved the wand over the fire the flames leaped up towards the sky. The snow melted, the earth was covered with green, the birds began to sing, and the flowers bloomed in the forest. It was summer. On the ground the star-shaped flowers changed into ripe strawberries.

"Gather them quickly, Marouckea," said June.

Joyfully she thanked the months, and after filling her apron ran home.

Helen and her mother were much surprised when they saw the sweet, ripe strawberries.

"Where did you get them?" asked Helen.

"Up on the mountain," answered her sister. "They grew near a big beech tree."

Helen gave a few to her mother and ate all the rest herself, but did not offer any to Marouckea. Being tired of strawberries, on the third day she wanted some fresh red apples.

"Run, Marouckea," said she, "and fetch me fresh red apples from the mountain."

"Apples in winter, sister? The trees have neither leaves nor fruit."

"Go, at once," cried Helen. "And do not return until you get them."

As before the girl went out and wandered over the mountain until she saw the light from the fire. Then she climbed up to where the twelve months sat and stared at the fire.

"Good men," said she, "may I warm myself at your fire? The winter cold chills me."

The great January raised his head and looked at her.

"Why do you come here?" said he.

"I have come to look for red apples."

"But this is winter, and not the season for apples," said January.

"I know," said the girl, "but my sister Helen wants some fresh apples and I dare not return without them. I pray you, tell me where I may find them."

Then the great January arose and went to one of the older months. Placing the wand in his hand, he said, "Brother September, you take the highest place."

September moved to the highest stone and waved the wand over the fire.

The flames sprang up, the snow disappeared, the wind blew the leaves from the trees, a few flowers were seen here and there, and Marouckea saw an apple tree with bright red fruit.

"Take them quickly," said September.

She thanked him and shook the tree. First one apple fell, then another.

"That is enough," said September; "now hurry home."

Helen and her mother were surprised when they saw the apples.

"Where did you get them?" asked Helen.

"There are more on the mountain," answered Marouckea.

"Then why did you not bring more?" said Helen, angrily. "You must have eaten them on your way back."

"No, dear sister, I have not even tasted them," said Marouckea. "I shook the tree twice. One apple fell each time. Then I was told to hurry home."

Helen found the apples the most delicious she had ever tasted. When she had eaten them both, she made up her mind to have some more.

"Mother," she said, "I will go and fetch some more myself. I shall be able to find

the mountain and the tree. The old men may call 'Stop,' but I will not leave till I have shaken down all the apples on the tree. Give me my cloak."

In spite of all her mother said she put on her cloak, covered her head with a warm hood, and took the road to the mountain.

Snow covered everything. There was no path and Helen was soon lost and nearly frozen. After a while she saw a light above her and climbed up towards it. There was the big fire, the twelve blocks of stone, and the twelve months. She drew near the fire and warmed her hands. She did not ask permission, nor did she speak one polite word.

"What brings you here? What do you seek?" asked January.

"I am not going to tell you," said Helen. "You have no right to ask me questions."

Then she turned her back to him and went into the forest.

The great January frowned, and waved

his wand over his head. The sky became covered with clouds, the fire went down, snow fell in large flakes, and an icy wind howled round the mountain. In the fury of the storm Helen wandered about on the mountain.

Marouckea and her mother watched and waited; but Helen never returned.[1]

THE MUSIC OF THE SEA

Soon after the earth was created, there came to Finland an old man with gray hair and beard, whose heart was always young.

This man loved music more than anything else in the world. His voice was soft and low, and he was the sweetest singer that ever lived.

Vanemuine could hear music in the

[1] A Russian folk story.

flowers, in the stars, in the trees — in everything on the earth, or in the sky.

One day he said to himself, "I am very sorry for the people who cannot hear all the lovely music that I can hear. I will make a harp so that they can listen to its voice. Then I shall teach them some of the wonderful music that is in the world."

He made the harp from the wood of the fir tree and the bones of a giant pike which he had caught below a waterfall.

The body of the harp was formed of the fir tree, the screws were made from the teeth of the pike, and the strings were made of hairs from the mane of a horse.

Drawing his fingers lightly over the strings of his harp, he brought forth tones that were deep and clear, mighty and beautiful. He wandered through the bare and silent forest, playing as he walked.

When he drew near, life was awakened where before there had been stillness as of the dead. The trees bent down their

branches to listen, and as they heard they began to bud and bloom. The singing birds drew near, and followed him that they might hear the sweetness of his music. Where his feet touched the earth, the flowers burst forth and lifted their heads shyly to catch the soft sweet sounds.

The beasts of the field gathered about him like the clouds which gather in the sky when the wind blows. The gray wolves came from their hiding places in the marshes; the bears left their homes within the hollows of the giant pines, and clambered over everything in their way in their eagerness to be near the wonderful music. The wolves mounted upon the little hills about, and the bears climbed into the trees.

So tender the sounds, so sweet the songs, that when men heard them, all anger ceased and their thoughts were thoughts of peace. Not one quarrel, not one cross word, was heard where even the echoes of the music went. The hardest of hearts

were softened and no living thing could resist the witchery of Vanemuine's music.

All these beautiful things happened whenever Vanemuine touched his harp strings and sang his sweet songs.

One morning Vanemuine wandered far away until he came to the shores of the great ocean.

There he sat down on a rock close to the water's edge and played softly on his wonderful harp.

But by and by he laid aside the harp and, lifting up his voice, sang as he had never sung before. He sang of the glory of the heavens and the beauty of the earth, of the flowing waters and the rustling leaves, of the joys and sorrows that come to all people, — the rich and the poor alike.

As he sang the golden Sun paused in his course to listen, and the great waves of the sea stood still. All the big fishes and all the little fishes swam toward the shore and lifted their heads that they might hear.

Suddenly Vanemuine was raised up, up, up, and carried on the wings of the four winds to the golden palace of the sky, there to live and sing forever.

The sea nymphs found his wonderful harp on the white sands, and took it to their king in his shell palace at the bottom of the sea.

There they still play on the wonderful harp night and day, never tiring of its sweet tones.

The harp of Vanemuine is still heard in the low, murmuring music of the sea.[1]

THE BEAR'S SHORT TAIL

One cold day in winter a fox saw some men taking home a wagon load of fine fish.

[1] A Finnish legend.

He jumped upon the wagon, while the men were not looking, and quietly threw off one fish and then another, until he thought he had enough for a good dinner. Then he slipped off the wagon again and was enjoying his feast when a bear came down the road.

"Good morning," said the bear. "You have had very good luck to-day. Those are fine fish. I have not seen finer ones in many a long day. Where did you get them?"

"I will show you if you will go fishing with me to-night," replied the fox. "I know all the secrets of fishing. One is that you must stay on the ice from sunset to sunrise. You need a great deal of patience to make a good fisherman."

"Yes, I know that," said the bear. "I will get my hook and line and meet you at the river at sunset."

"Oh, you do not need a hook and line," said the fox. "The very best way to fish is to use your tail. You have a fine tail for

fishing and will get more in that way than in any other."

At sunset the bear met the fox and they went out together on the frozen river until they came to a small hole in the ice.

"Now," said the fox, "you must sit down here on the ice and put your tail through this hole. Remember that one secret of successful fishing is to keep your tail in the water a long time. You are very strong, and therefore you need not be in a hurry. Wait until a great many fishes take hold of your tail, then pull with all your might."

So the bear sat very still for a long time, just as the sly fox had told him to do. When he began to feel cold and changed his position a little, his tail was slightly pulled, for it was freezing to the ice.

"Now, I will pull the fish out of the water," he said: "How good they will be! I shall have a fine dinner!"

But the fox said: "Don't pull yet! More fish will take hold of your tail, and you will have a bigger haul. You are very strong and must catch all you possibly can."

So the bear waited and the next time he changed his position, his tail pulled harder than ever. But when he was about to jerk it out, the fox stopped him.

"Not yet," said he; "sit still! If you wait until sunrise, you will get the very best haul. You have waited so long it would be a pity for you not to get a great many."

Just before sunrise the fox ran away to his warm home in the woods. There he lay down and laughed and laughed.

On the bank of the river some dogs began to bark. They frightened the bear so that he jumped up quickly and pulled with all his might to get away. He pulled so hard that he left part of his tail frozen to the ice. Bears have had short tails ever since.[1]

THE SPINNING WHEEL OF STARS

Frigga lived in Asgard, a city glittering with bright gold, upon a hill far away among the clouds. Only one passage led from Asgard to the earth, and that was the rainbow.

[1] A Finnish folk story.

It was the strongest bridge ever made, and was of three distinct colors.

Frigga was tall and beautiful. She wore the most wonderful dresses, sometimes of green, sometimes of purest white, and sometimes of scarlet and gold.

She was allowed to sit on the highest throne in the sky. This great throne was like a watch tower. From it one could see the whole sky, the wide world, and all that was being done in either place.

Odin, the king of the sky, and Frigga, his wife, were the only people who ever sat on this throne. Odin consulted Frigga in all affairs of state, for she was gifted with a knowledge of all things.

But Frigga liked most to stay in her own palace, which was of gold and silver adorned with pearls and many other beautiful jewels. She loved to spin, and no spider ever spun so fine a thread as she could spin on her wonderful spinning wheel.

She worked all day doing things to make

other people happy, and when her work was done, she sat down to spin golden thread, or weave long strips of bright colored clouds which drifted across the sky.

For this work she had a beautiful spinning wheel of gold, set with many precious jewels. These jewels were so bright that when they were near, there was no need of any other light.

Every evening, when her spinning was done, Frigga put her jeweled spinning wheel in one of the palace windows.

The jewels shone so brightly that the people on the earth could see them. They called them stars.

If you look at the sky on a clear summer night you, too, may see this wonderful spinning wheel of stars, which some people point out as the Belt of Orion. It is easy to find the three great stars that are arranged in a row like three great diamonds sparkling in the frame of the wheel.[1]

[1] A Norse myth.

WHY THE SEA IS SALT

Frodi was king of the Northland.

In his kingdom a traveler always found a hearty welcome; there was no lack of food in the country; the fields bore double harvest, and the king was ever ready to relieve want where his help was needed. Because he and all his people lived such quiet and peaceful lives he was ever after called Peace Frodi.

A pair of millstones were once given to King Frodi. They looked like two common millstones and no one who did not know what they could do, would think of taking any notice of them. But they were really of more value than anything else that Frodi

had in his whole kingdom, for they could produce anything that their owner wished. They could bring gold, silver, precious stones, love, joy, or peace. That is why it is not too much to say that these stones were worth more than all the other treasures of the king put together.

But those wonderful millstones had been of no use to King Frodi, because they were so large and heavy that none of his servants were able to turn them.

Frodi called upon his strongest warriors, but it was of no use. There was no one in his kingdom who could move these magic millstones.

While driving through the country one day, King Frodi saw two strange women who attracted his attention at once. They were of great size and strength, being eight feet in height and broader across the shoulders than any of the king's warriors. The muscles of their arms stood out, and they seemed so wonderfully strong and

powerful that Frodi took them back to the palace with him. Leading them to the mill, he showed them the magic millstones.

"You are such strong women," he said, "that I am sure you can use these millstones for me. Try them and see if you can move them."

"Oh, yes, we can turn those easily," said the women. "What shall we grind for you, King Frodi?"

The king thought for a few minutes, and then said, "Grind out gold, peace, and plenty."

"Those are good things," said the women. "We will gladly grind them for you, great king."

At the women's touch the millstones began to grind. They ground so rapidly that soon there were great piles of gold heaped upon the floor of the mill. It was so bright and yellow that Frodi would not allow the women to stop grinding for a minute.

"Grind more! Grind more!" he cried.

"Oh, king, we are so weary that we must have rest, if only for a few minutes," said the poor women.

But glittering gold and good luck had hardened the heart of the king.

"No one should be weary who is grinding out beautiful, yellow gold," said he. "Grind more, women! You must not stop grinding!"

So the greedy king kept them working night and day for many weeks.

At last the poor women became so weary that one night while Frodi slept, they told the millstones to grind out brave warriors instead of gold.

The millstones ground faster and faster. Hundreds of strong warriors sprang out and killed King Frodi and all his men.

Then the strongest of the warriors placed the magic millstones and the two women on a ship to take them to a far country over the the sea.

The women thought that they would have a good long rest while on the ship. But

after they were well out on the sea the warrior called them to him.

"Salt will sell well in the country to which we are going," he said. "Go to the mill-stones and grind some salt!"

The women obeyed and ground out great piles of salt. They worked all day and when night came were very tired and needed rest and sleep.

"Brave warrior," they said, "we have ground salt for you all day. Though we are very strong we do not wish to work all the time. We must stop now and rest."

"Rest, indeed!" cried the cruel warrior; "there is no time to rest. I brought you with me to work, not to rest. Grind on, lazy women, grind on!"

The poor women ground on and on, until at last they ground so much salt that the ship sank and all went to the bottom of the sea.

There they are still grinding, if no one has told them to stop.

That is why the sea is salt.[1]

[1] A Norse folk story.

HOW A TROLL MADE A LAKE

A troll once made his home on a hill near a village.

Now trolls are very wicked little creatures, and they cannot bear to live near people who are good. So when a church was built on the side of the hill, this little troll did not like it. Then, too, he was very much annoyed by the ringing of bells in the steeple of the church, so that at last he was obliged to give up his home and go away. He went to a village near by where the people were not so good. There he lived for some time in peace and quiet.

It chanced one day that a man who lived near the old home of the troll came to that village on business and met the troll on the road.

The troll, who on that day had taken the form of a man, began to talk to the man.

"Where do you live?" he asked.

"I am from the town just south of here," replied the man.

"Oh, are you?" said the troll. "I used to live there and I thought I knew every man in the place. I suppose you went there after I left."

"I have not been there long, only a few months," said the man.

"When are you going back?" asked the troll.

"I hope to get through with my business and go home to-night," replied the man.

"Will you be so kind as to take a letter for me back with you?" asked the troll.

The man, of course, said that he would take it.

Then the troll put a letter into the man's coat pocket and told him not to take it out until he came to the church. He was then

to throw it over the churchyard wall, and the person for whom it was intended would get it.

The troll went away in great haste, and the man forgot about the letter until the day after. He was sitting in the meadow at the foot of the hill on which the church stood when he chanced to remember it.

"I must take it to the churchyard," he said. "I wonder for whom it is intended. It is a strange way to deliver a letter."

He drew it out of his pocket and sat with it in his hand. Suddenly he felt a drop of water in the palm of his hand. He looked to see what it was and to his surprise saw a tiny stream coming from under the seal of the letter.

The water began to run faster and faster and soon the letter burst open and a flood rushed out. It was as much as the poor man could do to escape with his life; for the wicked troll had inclosed a whole lake in his letter.

The troll had intended to destroy the church and the bells which had so annoyed

him when he lived on the hill, but the water ran out in the meadow instead, and made a lake. There it is still to be seen.[1]

[1] A Danish folk story.

THE LITTLE BLUE FLOWERS

Once upon a time, in a lonely valley where snow-capped mountains shone all day in the sunlight, there lived a poor man with his wife and children.

Every day he used to drive his small herd of cows to graze in the pastures. He always took his crossbow with him to protect his cattle from the wild beasts, and now and then he would shoot a deer, for he was very skillful with his bow.

One day, when he was watching his cows and goats in a fine pasture, he suddenly saw a splendid deer with large horns that shone like the sun. He at once seized his bow and crept forward on hands and knees until near enough to shoot. But the deer sprang

from rock to rock, and ran higher up the mountain. Now and then it seemed to wait for him, yet always kept just beyond shot of his bow.

The man eagerly continued the chase until he reached a hollow place near the top of the mountain. Here the deer vanished through a doorway in the side of the mountain. The man came up and looked in, but could see only a bright light shining.

He went boldly through the long entrance way and found himself in a large hall whose walls and ceiling were of dazzling crystal and fiery garnets. Through the crystal walls he could see flowery meadows and shady woods.

A beautiful woman was standing in the center of the hall. She was dressed in silvery garments that were caught in at the waist by a golden girdle. Resting on her yellow curls was a beautiful golden crown set with many bright jewels. In her hand were flowers as blue as the eyes with which she gently looked at the man.

Around her were many lovely maidens with crowns of roses on their heads and dainty light garments floating about them. One was playing on the harp, some were singing, and some were dancing lightly and merrily about their queen.

But the man had no eyes for any but the queen. He went forward and sank on his knees before her.

She smiled and said in a sweet gentle

voice, "Choose what you think the most costly of all my treasures, silver, gold, jewels, or one of my maidens."

"Kind queen," he answered, "give me only the bunch of flowers in your hand. I desire no other good thing on the earth."

As she gave them to him she said: "You have chosen wisely. They are indeed precious. Take them and take also this seed with which to sow your fields, that they may bear you many blue flowers such as these."

He would have thanked her, but a peal of thunder shook the hall and mountain, and the vision was gone. The entrance to the beautiful palace of the queen had vanished and he saw nothing but the rocks and snow-fields.

The blue flowers were still in his hand, however, and beside him was a wooden measure full of seed. This proved to the man that what had happened was not a mere dream.

He took up his bow and his presents and went slowly down the mountain.

When he showed his wife the bunch of blue flowers and told her of his visit to the wonderful palace, she was angry that he had not asked for more.

"You might have had gold, pearls, and diamonds," she said, "and you bring home nothing but a few faded blue flowers. You may as well throw those out for all the good they will do. I thought you were a wiser man than that. And we are so poor, too!"

So she scolded and grumbled. He listened patiently, and then went out and plowed a field. There he sowed some of the seed, but a great deal was left over. He sowed a second, and a third field, each larger than the first, and yet much seed remained.

Soon little green sprouts showed themselves over all the fields. They grew larger and larger, until at length the blue flowers unfolded themselves in great numbers.

They were so lovely to look upon that even the wife rejoiced at the sight.

The man watched over his fields day and night, and he often saw the beautiful queen of the mountain wandering about among the flowers with her maidens. But she never came near enough for the man to see her closely, or to speak to her. She seemed to be watching and caring for the flowers.

When the flowers were withered and the seeds ripe, she came to the cottage.

"Do you know how to spin flax?" she asked the wife.

"No," said the woman, who had never heard of flax before.

"Can you weave linen?" asked the queen.

"No, indeed," said the woman.

"Then I will teach you to spin and to weave," said the good queen. "The little blue flower that I gave to your husband was the flax flower. It is my own flower, and I love it and wish to teach the people on the earth to love it."

The queen showed them how the flax was prepared. Then she taught them to spin and weave it, and how to bleach the linen so that it became as white as new-fallen snow.

The man and his wife soon grew very rich.

Then the wife said: "You did, indeed, choose wisely, my husband. The little blue flowers were better for us than gold or jewels." [1]

THE UNSELFISH MOON

In the days of long ago, when the earth and the sky were very young, the Sun, the Moon, and the Wind were invited to a party given by their uncle and aunt, Thunder and Lightning.

[1] A German folk story.

Everything on the earth and in the sky was invited to this party. It was to be the largest and most delightful one ever given. Thunder and Lightning had been preparing for the feast for many days. All the good things from every corner of the earth were being brought together so that there should be plenty for all the guests and yet some to spare.

When the invitations came, the Sun, the Moon, and the Wind were very happy.

"Oh, mother, may we go?" they cried. "You will take us, will you not, dear mother?"

"You may go," said their mother, who was one of the most distant stars that could be seen far up in the sky. "I shall not go, however. It would never do for all the lights in the sky to go away at the same time. The earth children will need me on that night to give them light."

"Well, mother," said the Moon, "if you are not going, I shall not go, either. I shall

stay at home with you to keep you company. You would be so lonely shining here by yourself."

"No, dear child," said the Star Mother, "you must not disappoint your aunt and uncle. They would be very sorry if you did not go. You must go with your two brothers."

At last the long-looked-for night came, and the Star Mother dressed her three children with care, and having told them to be good and polite, she sent them to the party. She sat at home and shone brightly while waiting for them to return.

Both the Sun and the Wind were very selfish, greedy children. They enjoyed the games and the dancing and the great feast that had been prepared for them without a thought of their mother who had stayed at home to shine for the earth children.

Although they were given more than they could possibly want for themselves, and were told that they could take home as much as

they wished, they did not think of taking anything to their mother. They put all that they could into their pockets, however, for themselves.

But the gentle little Moon did not forget her mother. She put aside a little of every dainty dish that was brought around that the lonely one at home might also share in the treat.

When Thunder and Lightning saw this, they gave her many lovely things to take home with her.

All night long the Star Mother kept watch for her children with her little bright eye.

On their return she said: "Well, children, you have had a fine party and have had many lovely things given to you. Did you think of your mother while enjoying yourselves with your friends? What have you brought home for me?"

The Sun, who was the oldest, said: "I have brought nothing home for you, mother. I went out to enjoy myself with my friends

and did not have time to think of you." Then he went off by himself and sat in a corner and began to eat the many good things he had brought home in his pockets.

The mother turned to the Wind and said, "What have you brought for me, my son?"

"I have not brought anything for you," said the Wind. "You could hardly expect me to think of you, or bring you anything when I went out merely for my own pleasure."

Then he, too, went and sat in a corner to enjoy by himself all the good things he had brought home with him.

The mother shook her head sadly and said to her daughter: "I did not know that I had such greedy, selfish children. Little Moon, did you remember your mother and bring her something, or did you think only of yourself, like your brothers?"

The Moon answered: "I have brought you a little of everything that was given to me, mother. Uncle and aunt were so

kind and generous with their good things that I have a great feast for you."

So the Moon set before the Star Mother more good things than she had ever seen before.

When the mother had thanked her little daughter, she called the Sun and the Wind to her and said: "My boys, you will never be loved if you are not more thoughtful and careful of other people's pleasures. You must learn to be unselfish if you wish people to care for you. Sun, if you persist in your selfishness, men will turn their backs upon you and will avoid you. Wind, take care lest men close their doors against you and think unkindly of you."

To the Moon she said: "My daughter, because you are unselfish and because you remembered your mother, keeping for her a large share of your own enjoyment, you shall be bright and beautiful, and men shall love you and wish to have you with them always. No one shall ever speak unkindly of you."

That is why the Moon's light is so soft and beautiful and all men love her even to this day.[1]

THE SOLE

Once upon a time the fishes in the sea grew very tired of the lack of order among themselves.

None turned aside for the others, but each swam right or left as best pleased him. Sometimes one would swim between those who wished to be together, or would push them to one side in a rude manner. The stronger ones would give the weaker ones blows with their tails which made them get out of the way in a hurry.

[1] A German folk story.

Sometimes the weak ones would crowd together and tease the strong ones, or the big ones would eat the little ones.

So the sea was not a very happy place to live in. All the fishes began to wish for a change.

"How fine it would be," thought some of them, "if we had a king who could make our laws and be our judge!"

They talked this over among the other fishes, and at last a meeting was called and all the fishes came to choose a king. There were the herring, the sole, the pike, and many, many others, some large, some small.

They decided that their king should be the fish that could swim the fastest and could best give help to the weak ones.

They formed in line near the shore and waited for the pike to give a signal with his tail.

When all the fishes were in line ready to start, the pike gave the signal and away they went! They darted like arrows through the water.

Suddenly a cry was heard, "The herring is first, the herring is first!"

"*Who* is first?" cried the flat sole, who had expected to win and was angry when he found several ahead of him.

"The herring, the herring is our king! Hurrah for King Herring!" was the reply.

"The herring!" cried the envious sole, and he was so angry and sneered so at the new king that ever since that time his mouth has grown crooked and is all on one side.[1]

FORGET-ME-NOT

Hans and Gretchen were two little German children who were very good friends.

[1] A German folk story.

They loved each other so dearly that they wanted to be together all the time.

Gretchen's mother used to say, "Where-ever Hans is, I know I shall find Gretchen, for she is never far away from him."

When not in school, Hans and Gretchen would roam about in the woods searching for wild flowers. They knew the names of most of those near their home, how they grew, and in what kind of soil they did the best.

One bright summer morning the children were walking by a river which flows into the Rhine.

Suddenly Gretchen saw some lovely blue flowers growing close to the edge of the water.

"Oh, Hans, see those beautiful little blue flowers down there," she cried. "What are they? I wish I could get them."

"Wait here, and I will try to get them for you," said Hans.

The bank of the river was very steep, but Hans carefully made his way down to the

water's edge. He was about to pick the flowers when his foot slipped on the wet

stones, and he fell into the swift waters of the river. The tide was so strong that he was soon carried into deep water.

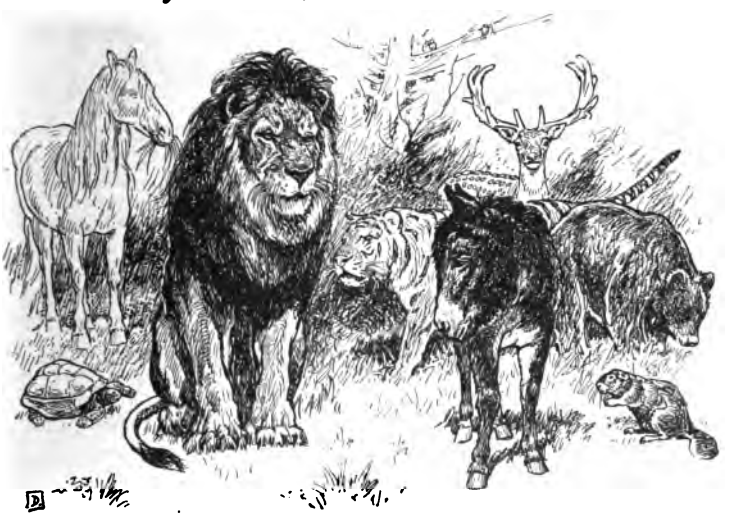
"Forget-me-not!" he cried as the waters bore him down to the falls below.

Poor little Gretchen! There was no fear of her forgetting her blue-eyed friend who

had lost his life in trying to get the little flowers for her.

"Forget-me-not!" she would say over and over again, till by and by her friends called the little blue flower by that name.

Now those tiny flowers are called forget-me-nots by all the world.[1]



THE DONKEY'S LONG EARS

At the very beginning when the animals were put into the world, each was given a name which it was to bear for all time.

[1] A German folk story.

One day not long after the king of the animals called all the birds and beasts together.

The birds came first, the bluebird, robin, wren, and sparrow. Then came the deer, the lion, and the tiger. Last of all came the bear, the beaver, and the tortoise. Each traveled as fast as he could, for he wished to see the king and hear what he had to say.

"I have called you together," said the king, "to find out whether each of you can tell his name. Come one at a time and speak clearly."

So each of the animals passed before the king, bowed and gave his name.

"I am called bear."

"I, O king, am the tiger."

"And I am called horse."

At last one came who had forgotten the name given to him. He stood silently before the king, not knowing what to do or say.

"Speak," cried the king. "Why do you keep us waiting?"

Still the poor animal was silent.

Then the king was very angry, and taking the forgetful animal by the ears, he pulled them far out from his head.

"Now remember you are called donkey!" he cried.

And donkeys' ears have been long ever since.[1]

WHY THE COCK CROWS AT DAWN

In a country that is far away from here there once lived a young man named Alectryon. He was a servant to Mars, the king of war, and lived in a beautiful palace.

But although he had such a fine home, Alectryon was not at all happy.

Mars was a severe master who had never been known to do deeds of kindness, or to

[1] A Spanish folk story.

forgive an injury. He was fond of war and strife, and all the people were afraid of him.

It was the duty of Alectryon to keep a strict watch at the entrance of the palace every night, and to allow no one to enter without first giving Mars due warning of his approach. But he had one special duty that was more important than all others, — he was to call Mars just before the sun rose in the morning.

Over and over again Mars had warned Alectryon that for no reason whatever must he neglect this duty.

Night after night Alectryon walked up and down in front of the palace. He longed to sleep, yet feared to do so. He was very fond of his bed, and thought it hard that he should have to keep awake to watch while others slept.

As nothing ever happened and no one ever approached the palace, Alectryon began to be less careful about his duties.

One night he said to himself: "No harm can befall me or my master if I take a little nap. I am tired and sleepy. Mars need never know, for I shall call him as usual, just before sunrise."

So Alectryon lay down and was soon fast asleep.

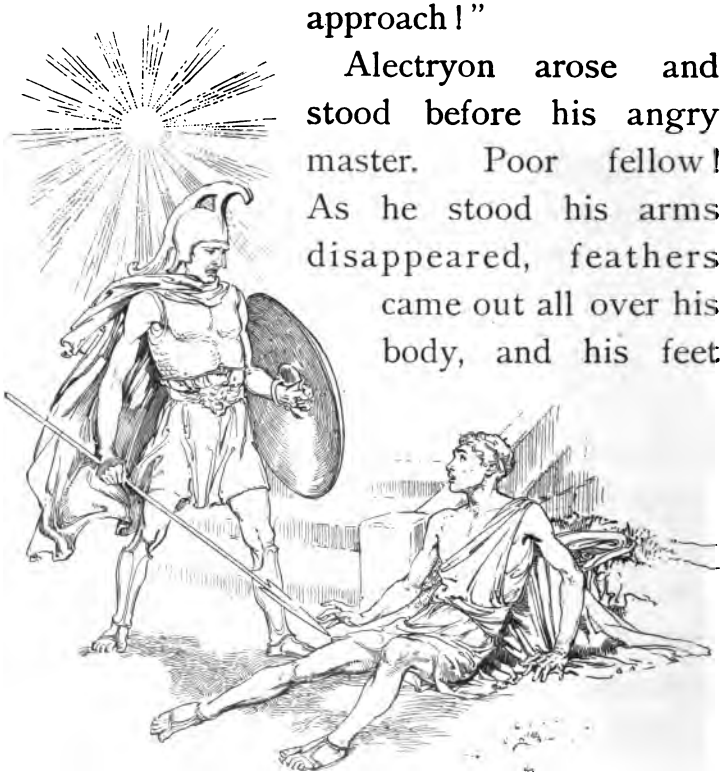
He slept so soundly that he did not even stir when Aurora flung open the red and yellow gates of the eastern sky, and Apollo rode forth in his golden chariot to receive the greetings of the earth.

Apollo drove rapidly along, glancing right and left, and taking note of all he saw. Nothing escaped his bright and piercing eyes, and he was soon aware of the sleeping watchman.

Just then Mars appeared. Oh, how angry he was when he saw the sun high in the heavens and his servant quietly sleeping instead of watching!

"Arise, unfaithful Alectryon!" cried he. "Never more shall you neglect your duty.

I condemn you, henceforth, to give daily warning to the sleeping world of the sun's approach!"



Alectryon arose and stood before his angry master. Poor fellow! As he stood his arms disappeared, feathers came out all over his body, and his feet were changed into the claws of a cock.

In a moment up went his head, and he burst forth in a loud "Cock-a-doodle-doo!"

If you visit any farmyard very early in

the morning, you may hear the once careless Alectryon giving warning of the sun's approach.[1]

THE ORIGIN OF FROGS

Once upon a time when Apollo, the king of the sun, and Diana, the queen of the moon, were little babies, their mother was in great trouble.

A wicked queen had driven her from her home in the sky and compelled her to wander about on the earth. The earth people were told that they must show neither kindness nor pity to poor Latona and her babies.

So it happened that this beautiful woman wandered about on the earth, carrying in her arms her two bright, sunny-haired children.

1 A Roman myth.

Poor Latona! She found it very hard to get food and drink or shelter for the night.

One day she came to a pond of clear, cool water. The sun was shining fiercely, and Latona was faint with thirst. She laid her babies on the grass and knelt down by the pond to drink.

Suddenly some men came running toward her.

"Go away from there!" they cried. "You can have no water from that pond. Go away at once!"

Latona paid no attention to what they said, for she knew that the pond did not belong to them. She thought she would wait until the men went back to their work, then she and her babies could drink without being annoyed.

But when the men saw that she was not going away, they sprang into the shallow water and stirred up the mud at the bottom. The water was soon so black and muddy that it was not fit to drink.

The men danced about in it regardless of soiling their fine green coats and white vests.

They laughed and shouted and mocked at Latona, saying: "Come and drink, Latona! Come and drink this pure, fresh water!"

Then Latona called to Jupiter, king of the sky, and asked him for help in her troubles.

"Good, kind Jupiter," she cried, "send down some punishment to these cruel men. My babies and I have wandered about all day in the hot sun, and we are ready to perish with thirst. If you do not help us, oh, Jupiter, we shall die."

The great king heard, and looked down in pity upon the poor woman and her little ones. He sent his messenger to take her to a country where she could live in peace and happiness.

The men in the water were still hopping about, but they were growing smaller and smaller. Their fine green coats and snow-white vests were changed to skin; their

necks shrank and disappeared until their heads joined their bodies; their mouths were stretched wide by their harsh, mocking voices.

They were great green frogs![1]

WHY THE PARTRIDGE FLIES LOW

Dædalus was a skillful workman who had lost the favor of his king and was shut up in a high tower. He tried many times to escape, but each time was found and brought back.

"The king may rule the land and the sea,"

[1] A Greek myth.

said he, "but he does not rule the air. I shall try that way."

So he set to work to make wings that he might fly away from his prison. He made them with light wooden frames and wire springs, curved like the wings of a bird. Over these frames he placed feathers which he and his son Icarus had gathered from the birds that built their nests on the tower. He began with the smaller feathers, fastening them on with wax, then added the larger ones, which he tied with thread.

One night Dædalus put the broad wings on his shoulders, stepped out of the window, and rose upward into the air. He found that he could fly easily, but that the wings were not strong enough to carry him and his son, also. He flew back to the tower, took off his wings, and began a smaller pair for Icarus.

When these were finished, he had to spend several nights in teaching his son to use them.

By and by they could both manage their wings very well, and they flew away to a new country.

Dædalus warned his son that they must

keep close together and go neither too high

nor too low, lest the sun's heat should melt the wax that fastened the feathers or the dampness of the sea wet them.

Icarus was delighted to be flying through the air so rapidly. When morning came, it was great fun to see the people far below him at work in the fields. He soon forgot the danger and his father's warning, and rose higher and higher, until he could feel the great heat from the sun.

But this heat softened the wax on his wings, and Icarus found that some of the feathers were falling off. Soon he felt the wings loosen and droop. He fluttered with his arms, but no feathers remained to beat the air, and he sank down faster and faster until he fell into the sea.

Dædalus missed his son from his side and called, "Icarus, where are you?"

There was no answer, but a few feathers floating on the water told what had happened. He flew down and tenderly carried the body to land, where he laid it in the

earth, weeping and wishing that he had never made the wings.

Then he flew on, until he reached Sicily, where he hung up his wings and never used them again.

Dædalus was so proud of his wings, and the many other wonderful things he had made, that he thought no one else could invent anything. He became very conceited and disagreeable.

His sister sent her son Perdix to him to learn all that he could, for she wanted him to be as skillful a workman as her brother.

Perdix proved to be a very bright boy. He was quick to learn and soon began to invent things himself.

One day he found the backbone of a great fish on the seashore. He took it home, and the next day showed Dædalus a saw that he had made of iron that was shaped like the fishbone. No one had ever seen a saw before.

Soon Perdix had invented more useful things than Dædalus himself. Instead of being pleased with him Dædalus was very angry. He did not like any one to be thought so clever as himself.

"The boy will soon be claiming that he is greater than I, who first sailed through the air," he thought.

Not long after this the two were working together on the top of a very high building.

Suddenly Dædalus gave Perdix a hard push that sent him headlong down toward the ground.

But Athena, the queen of learning and invention, loved the youth, and when she saw him falling, changed him into a partridge before he reached the ground.

This bird does not build his nest in trees, but in low hedges and in the grass. He never flies high, perhaps because he is afraid.[1]

[1] A Greek myth.

THE OLD MAN OF THE MEADOW

Tithonus was a beautiful youth who lived in Greece. He was light of heart and light of foot, and danced or sang the livelong day.

Every one who saw him loved him, but the one who loved him most was Aurora, the queen of dawn.

Tithonus loved Aurora. He never let a day pass by without seeing her start on her journey to the earth. He was so much afraid that he might miss her coming that he made his bed on the green grass in the meadow. At the first sign of light in the eastern sky he was up and ready to greet the beautiful queen of dawn.

It was Aurora who opened the golden

gates of the eastern sky so that the wonderful horses and chariot of Apollo might pass through to follow their shining path across the heavens.

It was Aurora who watched over the flowers and sprinkled them with refreshing dew. When they saw her coming, their colors grew brighter, and they nodded happily as she passed.

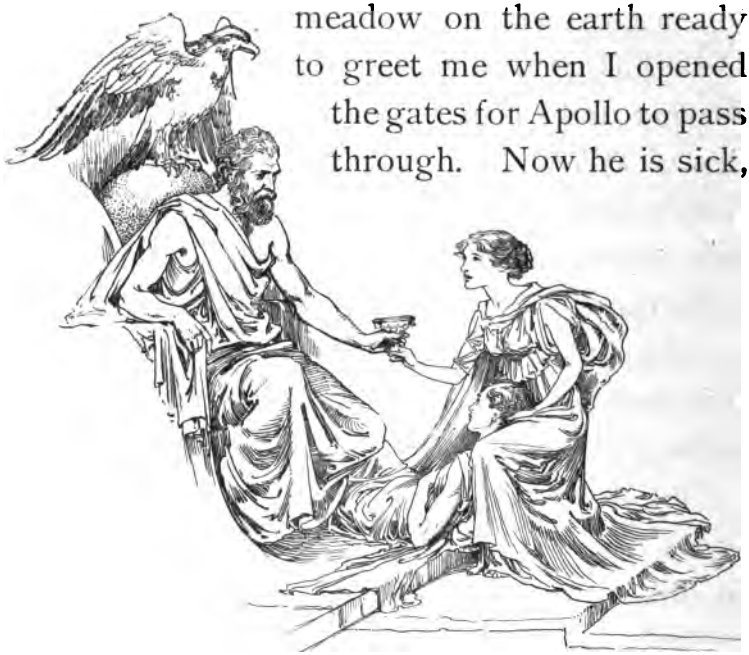
Aurora loved everything beautiful. That is why she loved Tithonus. Every day she watched for him in the meadow and smiled at his welcome.

One morning, when Aurora opened the gates of the sky, she did not find Tithonus in his usual place in the meadow. She looked anxiously about, and at last found him lying on the ground with pale face and closed eyes.

Quickly she took him in her arms and carried him up to the sky. There she took him to the king's palace.

"Oh, king," she cried, "give me something

that will make Tithonus live forever. We love each other so dearly that we cannot be parted. Every day he has been in the green meadow on the earth ready to greet me when I opened the gates for Apollo to pass through. Now he is sick,



and I fear he will die. Oh, great king, help me. Grant me this favor."

"Your wish shall be granted," said the king. "You shall keep the youth with you forever."

He gave Tithonus something to drink from a golden goblet, which seemed to give

him new life. The color came back to his face, and he stood before them more beautiful than ever before.

"You cannot go back to the earth," said the king. "No one who drinks from that goblet can return to the earth and live as he did before."

So it was that Tithonus went away from his own country and his own home to live in the home of Aurora in the sky.

There they had a beautiful palace with walls of silver and pillars of gold shining with many jewels.

For many years he lived among her people; hunted with her brother; or went with her at the first brightness of the morning to carry light and happiness to the earth. Here they roamed through field and forest, but always returned to their palace before Apollo entered the western gates of the sky.

After a time Tithonus grew so old and feeble that he could not hunt, nor take the journey to the earth.

Then Aurora wept sorrowfully: "It is all my fault. The king gave me what I asked for, and I begged that you should live forever. I did not remember to ask that you be always young."

As Tithonus grew older he grew smaller and smaller. Soon he grew so small that it was hard for Aurora to find him.

His only wish now was that he might lie in the green grass in the meadow, as he had done in his youth.

"You shall go back to your meadow, Tithonus," said Aurora. "My dearest wish is to make you happy."

So she gave Tithonus a wonderful little green suit just the color of grass. Then she took him back to the meadow on the earth, and left him where he loved to be.

There he may always be found, hopping about in the grass as happy as he was in his youth.

At sunrise he sits upon the tallest spear of grass he can find, and lifting his queer old

face to the eastern sky, he chirps to Aurora as she opens the gates for Apollo. And men call him the grasshopper.[1]

THE LAUREL TREE

Daphne was a beautiful little maiden who was the daughter of a river king.

Her father loved her more than anything else in the world. He made her a beautiful home in a cave which he had cut in a great cliff. It had white marble walls. Pretty water plants grew about it, and the sea nymphs had woven a soft green carpet for the floor. All day sounds of low, sweet

[1] A Greek myth.

music came from many shells hidden about in the cave.

Every night the river king went to visit the home of his beautiful daughter. He took her his most wonderful-colored shells and pebbles to play with. He told her of his travels and sang sweet songs to her. Sometimes he would wrap her in a soft, white cloud and take her with him on his journeys.

Every day Daphne was awake as soon as the morning star rose in the eastern sky. Trees, flowers, birds, and all the animals of the forest were her playmates. She was always happy when with them and had no wish for other friends.

One day when Daphne was running about in the forest playing with the flowers, the sun king saw her and wished to talk with her.

"Little maid," he called, "stay and talk with me. You are the most beautiful maiden I have ever seen. Your little feet are too tender for the rough earth. Let me carry you to my palace in the sky."

But Daphne was afraid and fled from him.

She did not wish to leave the earth and the friends she loved so well. She did not wish to live up in the sky. So she ran as fast as she could. The sun king ran after her, begging her to wait and listen to him.

"I will do you no harm, foolish maiden," he cried. "It is not an enemy who follows you. It is Apollo, the king of the sun. I will take you to a home more beautiful than any you have ever seen, more beautiful than any on the earth. Do not run from me, pretty maiden!"

But Daphne ran on. She rushed down to the edge of the river, calling loudly to her father as she ran.

"Oh, father, help!" she cried. "Save me from Apollo! I do not wish to go away from this earth. I do not wish to go with him to his home in the sky, but I cannot run any farther. Save me, father, save me!"

Her father heard her voice.

No sooner had she reached the water's edge, than her feet sank into the soil and became roots. A rough bark rapidly covered her body, and her arms became branches. Her trembling hands were filled with leaves, and her flying hair became green foliage.

Her father had saved her by changing her into a tree.

Apollo came up just then with outstretched arms. He clasped nothing but a rugged tree trunk.

At first he could not believe that the beautiful maiden had vanished from his sight forever. When he realized that the tree had been the maiden, he declared that it should hereafter be his favorite tree.

He gathered some of the dark, shiny leaves and wove them into a wreath.

"This tree shall be called the laurel," he said. "As I can never grow old, so the leaves of this tree shall be always green."

Since Daphne won the race with Apollo a wreath of these leaves has always been the

prize to the victor in every race, and kings, poets, and musicians are proud to wear a wreath of laurel leaves.[1]

NARCISSUS

Narcissus was a young hunter who lived long ago in Greece.

He had a beautiful sister whom he loved dearly. They spent all their time together, and were so much alike that people could not tell one from the other. They dressed alike, and both had beautiful yellow curls.

They were very fond of hunting, and Narcissus taught his sister to use the bow and arrow as well as he could use them himself.

[1] A Greek myth.

They spent many happy days together in the woods.

But one day the sister died, and Narcissus was left alone. He wandered sadly about, not caring for hunting now that he could not have his sister with him. He roamed through the woods, visiting all the spots that he and she had loved best. He tried to make believe that she was still with him.

One morning soon after his sister's death, he went to a clear spring for a drink. Kneeling upon the ground, he bent over the water. There for the first time in his life he saw his own face. He did not know who it was, and thought that his wish had been granted and his sister had come back to him.

He put out his arms to her, but the moment he touched the water the beautiful face in it vanished.

Astonished and dismayed, he slowly withdrew to a short distance. The waters were soon smooth and mirror-like again. Then

Narcissus went softly forward and again looked into the spring. There he saw the yellow curls and the beautiful, watchful eyes looking up from the bottom of the spring.

He spoke in soft, gentle tones, fearing that he might frighten her away again: "Dear sister, do you not know me, your brother Narcissus? Speak to me, sister! Come, let us go to the woods together. I am so lonely without you."

Her lips parted and moved as if answering him, but no sound reached his ears.

Narcissus stayed by the side of the spring all night and all the next day. He would sit and quietly watch the face in the water for a while, then he would try to coax the beautiful maiden, as he supposed it to be, to come out of the water and go to the woods with him.

For many days he lingered there without eating or drinking. At last he was too weak to watch any longer. His face became as white as the whitest lily, and his

yellow hair fell over his hollow cheeks. His weary head drooped until it rested on the grassy bank, and there was no longer a face in the clear water.

The great king of the sky looked down in pity on this beautiful young hunter. He was so sorry for him that he changed him into a lovely white flower, which still grows beside streams of water.

This flower is called Narcissus.[1]

HOW A GIANT MADE A MOUNTAIN

There is a mountain in England near Shrewsbury which some of the Welsh

[1] A Greek myth.

people believe was made by a wicked giant of their country.

For some reason or other this giant had a spite against the Mayor of Shrewsbury and all his people. He made up his mind to dam the River Severn, and by that means cause such a flood that the whole town of Shrewsbury would be drowned.

So off he started, carrying a great spadeful of earth. He tramped along mile after mile, trying to find the way to the town. But somehow he must have gone wrong, for he walked all day and could not find it.

When the sun was sinking in the west, the wicked old giant was puffing and blowing under his heavy load. He heartily wished he were at the end of his journey.

By and by he met a shoemaker walking along the road.

The shoemaker was carrying a bag of old boots and shoes on his back. He had gone to Shrewsbury to gather up boots and shoes to take home and mend.

The giant called out to him, "I say, my man, how far is it to Shrewsbury?"

"Shrewsbury?" said the shoemaker. "What do you want at Shrewsbury?"

"Why," replied the giant, "I am going to dam up the River Severn with this earth that I have here. I mean to drown the Mayor and all the people in the town."

"This will never do," thought the shoemaker. "If he does that, I shall lose all my customers. I must try to stop him in some way."

So he said to the giant: "You'll never get to Shrewsbury — at least, not to-day, nor to-morrow. Look at me! I've just come from Shrewsbury, and I've had time to wear out all these boots and shoes since I started."

He opened his bag and showed the giant all the old boots and shoes.

"Oh," said the giant, "then I must give it up. I am tired out already, and I cannot carry this heavy spadeful of earth any farther. I shall just drop it here and go back home."

He dropped the earth on the ground just where he stood, and scraped his big boots on the spade to get off all the earth, and no one ever heard anything of him afterward.

But where he put down his spadeful of earth it formed a great mountain, which is there to this day. Even the earth that he scraped off his big boots was such a pile that it made a little mountain, which still stands by the side of the big mountain.[1]

THE FOX'S WHITE-TIPPED TAIL

Once upon a time an old woman had a large farm of her own with many sheep, cows, pigs, and chickens.

[1] A Welsh folk story.

She was so busy taking care of her house and doing the dairy work that she had no time to look after the herds. So she decided to hire a boy to do that for her.

She started out early in the morning, and as she was walking along the road she met a bear.

"Whither away, Goody?" said the bear.

"I'm off to hire a herdsman," replied the old woman.

"Will you hire me? I will be a good herdsman," said the bear. "I have been waiting for some one to come along to hire me."

"Can you call the herds?" asked the woman.

"Oh, yes; just listen," said the bear, and he called in a loud, gruff voice, "Ugh, ugh, ugh!"

"No, no, you would never do," cried the woman. "That voice would frighten the cows and sheep so that they would never come home."

And she went on her way.

Soon she met a wolf.

"Whither away, Goody?" said the wolf.

"I'm off to hire a herdsman," replied the woman.

"Why not take me?" asked the wolf.

"I will," said the woman, "if you know how to call the animals."

"Uh, uh, uh," called the wolf, in a very high, shrill voice.

"That would never do," said the old woman. "Your voice is so shrill that all the animals will be afraid of you."

And she went on her way.

By and by she came to a fox sitting under a tree.

"Whither away this fine morning, Goody?" said he.

"I'm looking for some one to take care of my herds," replied the woman. "I cannot find any one who can do it. The bear's voice is too gruff and the wolf's is so shrill that it would frighten all the animals. I do not

have time to do my dairy work and look after the herds, too."

"Take me home with you, Goody. I know you will like me for a herdsman. I have a good voice, and I will be kind and gentle to your animals."

"Let me hear how you would call them," said the woman, who was tired and wanted to go home.

The fox opened his mouth wide and sang in a sweet, clear voice:

"Tum, ti, ti,
Tum, ti, ti,
Tra, la, la!"

"You will do very well," said the woman, quite carried away by his sweet singing. "Come home with me at once, and I will show you where my animals are and what you must do each day."

Everything went well for a few days. In the morning the fox drove the sheep and cows to the meadow where the grass was greenest. Then he fed the pigs and looked

after the geese and chickens. The woman thought she had found a good herdsman.

But after a time she noticed that her flocks were becoming smaller and smaller.

"Master Fox, where is my little black pig?" she asked one evening.

"Oh, he is still down in the meadow," said the fox.

Another night she said, "Master Fox, where is the old ram?"

"I left him at the brook getting a drink of nice clear water," replied the fox, but he was careful not to let the woman see his mouth.

One day when she had churned a fine lot of butter, she thought she would make a cake for supper. So she went out to look for some fresh eggs.

As she went near the hen house, she heard a great cackling and fussing. The cocks were flapping their wings and calling, "Cock-a-doodle-doo!" and the hens were running about in great confusion. And out walked Master Fox with a chicken on his back.

As he went, he sang in his sweet, clear voice:

"Tum, ti, ti,
Tum, ti, ti,
Old Goody's herdsman,
Sly Reynard am I!"

"You cruel, cunning fox," cried the woman. "You certainly are a fine herdsman. Where is my little black pig? Where is my old ram?"

The fox ran, and the woman ran after him.

As they passed the dairy he upset the cream, and it ran all over the ground and made a white spot at the tip of his tail. When he reached the woods, he stopped to rest and tried to get the cream off the end of his tail, but he could not.

If you look, you may still see it there.[1]

DANDELION STARS

Once upon a time a great many little stars lived in the sky with their mother, the moon, and their father, the sun. They lived in a wonderful palace made of gold and silver and shining with diamonds and rubies.

Every evening, as soon as it began to

[1] An old English folk story.

grow dark, these little stars left their beautiful palace and took their places in the sky.

Each star was usually glad when evening came and it could shine in its place. But one evening these little stars were cross and naughty, and they did not want to leave their golden palace. When the moon took her place, she looked about her in surprise. There were no little stars.

"Come, children," she called, "why are you not in your places to help me light up the sky? Father Sun has been down behind the mountains for an hour or more."

But the naughty little stars did not go quickly. They went as slowly as they could, hanging their heads and wearing a very cross look on their faces.

"We do not want to shine to-night," they said. "We have been in our places every night for weeks and weeks and weeks, and we are tired and want to stay at home. Why can't some one else shine to-night?"

When the moon saw that the stars were

so disagreeable and did not want to do what she wished, she called some other little stars to take their places.

She said to the naughty stars: "If you do not want to shine and help the people on the earth find their way, you must go away. Only kind little stars should live in the sky."

Then the little stars felt themselves falling, falling down from the sky. Faster and faster they fell, until they reached the earth and sank down into the grass.

The poor little things were afraid and cried themselves to sleep; for they were very lonely and were sorry that they had been naughty and disagreeable. In the morning the sun shone out brightly and wakened everything from sleep, even the baby stars under the grass. When they found themselves on the ground instead of in their beautiful shining palace, they began to cry again.

"What is the matter, little stars?" called the sun. "Why are you down on the ground?"

"Oh, Father Sun," the poor little stars cried, "we did not mean to be so naughty. When Mother Moon called us, we would not go to our places to shine and make the sky bright for the earth people. Mother Moon sent us down here because she said the sky was for good, kind stars, and there was no room for us. We are very sorry and want to go back. Please, take us back!"

"You cannot go back," said the sun, "but I will tell you something you can do down here. You can shine on the earth instead of in the sky, and so make the earth beautiful."

The sun smiled so pleasantly that the little stars felt happier and determined to do their very best to shine.

So every morning, when the sun smiled down at them, they opened their eyes and shone all day.

At night you can see the stars in the sky, and every day in summer you can see the dandelion stars shining in the grass.[1]

[1] An old English folk story.